HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY

C.O.P.E.C. COMMISSION REPORT

VOL. XII.

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HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY

C.O.P.E.C. COMMISSION REPORTS

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„ II.	Education
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Historical Illustrations of the Social Effects of Christianity

Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5–12, 1924

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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
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NEW YORK, TORONTO
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1924

BASIS

THE basis of this Conference is the conviction that the Christian faith, rightly interpreted and consistently followed, gives the vision and the power essential for solving the problems of to-day, that the social ethics of Christianity have been greatly neglected by Christians with disastrous consequences to the individual and to society, and that it is of the first importance that these should be given a clearer and more persistent emphasis. In the teaching and work of Jesus Christ there are certain fundamental principles—such as the universal Fatherhood of God with its corollary that mankind is God's family, and the law " that whoso loseth his life, findeth it "—which, if accepted, not only condemn much in the present organisation of society, but show the way of regeneration. Christianity has proved itself to possess also a motive power for the transformation of the individual, without which no change of policy or method can succeed. In the light of its principles the constitution of society, the conduct of industry, the upbringing of children, national and international politics, the personal relations of men and women, in fact all human relationships, must be tested. It is hoped that through this Conference the Church may win a fuller understanding of its Gospel, and hearing a clear call to practical action may find courage to obey.

GENERAL PREFACE

The present volume forms one of the series of Reports drawn up for submission to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, held in Birmingham in April 1924.

In recent years Christians of all denominations have recognised with increasing conviction that the commission to "go and teach all nations" involved a double task. Alongside of the work of individual conversion and simultaneously with it an effort must be made to Christianise the corporate life of mankind in all its activities. Recent developments since the industrial revolution, the vast increase of population, the growth of cities, the creation of mass production, the specialisation of effort, and the consequent interdependence of individuals upon each other, have given new significance to the truth that we are members one of another. The existence of a system and of methods unsatisfying, if not antagonistic to Christian life, constitutes a challenge to the Church. The work of a number of pioneers during the past century has prepared the way for the attempt to examine and test our social life in the light of the principles revealed in Jesus Christ, and to visualise the requirements of a Christian civilisation. Hitherto such attempts have generally been confined to one or two aspects of citizenship; and, great as has been their value, they have plainly shown the defects of

sectional study. We cannot Christianise life in compartments: to reform industry involves the reform of education, of the home life, of politics and of international affairs. What is needed is not a number of isolated and often inconsistent plans appropriate only to a single department of human activity, but an ideal of corporate life constructed on consistent principles and capable of being applied to and fulfilled in every sphere.

The present series of Reports is a first step in this direction. Each has been drawn up by a Commission representative of the various denominations of British Christians, and containing not only thinkers and students, but men and women of large and differing practical experience. Our endeavour has been both to secure the characteristic contributions of each Christian communion so as to gain a vision of the Kingdom of God worthy of our common faith, and also to study the application of the gospel to actual existing conditions—to keep our principles broad and clear and to avoid the danger of Utopianism. We should be the last to claim any large or general measure of success. The task is full of difficulty: often the difficulties have seemed insurmountable.

But as it has proceeded we have discovered an unexpected agreement, and a sense of fellowship so strong as to make fundamental divergences, where they appeared, matters not for dispute but for frank and sympathetic discussion. Our Reports will not be in any sense a final solution of the problems with which they are concerned. They represent, we believe, an honest effort to see our corporate life

steadily and whole from the standpoint of Christianity; and as such may help to bring to many a clearer and more consistent understanding of that Kingdom for which the Church longs and labours and prays.

However inadequate our Reports may appear—and in view of the magnitude of the issues under discussion and the infinite grandeur of the Christian gospel inadequacy is inevitable—we cannot be too thankful for the experience of united inquiry and study and fellowship of which they are the fruit.

It should be understood that these Reports are printed as the Reports of the Commissions only, and any resolutions adopted by the Conference on the basis of these Reports will be found in *The Proceedings of C.O.P.E.C.*, which also contains a General Index to the series of Reports.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

Basis iv

General Preface v

List of Commission Members ix

INTRODUCTORY

The Bearing of Christian Thought and Practice on Social Relationships 1

SECTION I

THE SOCIAL IDEAL IN CHRIST'S OWN TEACHING 7

SECTION II

THE ANCIENT PERIOD

(A) Apostolic and Primitive Christianity . . 29

(B) The Early Patristic Period: Irenæus to Constantine 42

(C) The Later Patristic Period: from Constantine to Gregory the Great 52

SECTION III

THE MIDDLE AGES

(A) Before Hildebrand 78

(B) Hildebrand and After 90

CONTENTS

SECTION IV

PAGE

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD . . 97

SECTION V

THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

(A) The Rise of the New Social Order (1770–1820) . 121

(B) The Reign of Individualism (1820–70) . . 133

(C) The Reaction from Individualism (1870–1920) . 144

SECTION VI

RETROSPECT . . . 161

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INTRODUCTION

The Bearing of Christian Thought and Practice on Social Relationships [1]

The subject has two aspects, one dealing with the Christian ideal of life, the other with the ways in which that ideal has in fact worked as a power in human society. In the light of both we may see our own present Christian duty more clearly, and how Christianity can most effectively meet the present crisis in the social relations of mankind.

As regards the Christian social ideal,[2] it is to be sought in the classic literature of its first and most creative period, the New Testament. Its workings in history need to be studied with special attention to the three great periods of civilisation into which Christian history naturally falls. The first of these is the period during which the Church was forming its ideals of a Christian social order within the ancient world of the Roman Empire, which was, to begin with, an alien environment, but later became a professedly Christian society. This latter phase, in which the 'Kingdom of God' is viewed as

[1] For a Bibliography of the Survey as a whole see p. 5, and for more detailed Bibliographies see pp. 25, 73, 95, 117, 158.

[2] This subject is more fully treated in the Report of the Commission on the Nature of God and His Purpose for the World, ch. i.

already present in principle, is reflected in Augustine's *City of God*. This great landmark is also the prelude to the next period, the Middle Ages, when efforts were made in Western Christendom to realise Augustine's ideals under very different political, economic and social conditions. Towards the close of this long period comes a stage of gradual transition, beginning about the fourteenth century, and becoming marked in the next two centuries. But its full effects, constituting a fresh period, the Modern, emerge only gradually. The rise of Capitalist commerce, the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, and the political revolution from its close onwards, for half a century and more, successively reveal this period as an epoch of social change comparable to the two already mentioned.

The following survey is an attempt to show how Christian social principles have actually been applied in theory or practice during the whole of this long story of past experience. It is put forward with a full sense of its inadequacy, due partly to the difficulty of attaining just perspective, and partly to the danger of overlooking the less obvious tendencies actually at work. Yet, such as it is, it may be better than none. At least it will recall the fact that there is a Christian past which still lives about us and in us, as ideas and usages, powerfully influencing the actual situation.

Accordingly the purpose of the following pages is, first, to draw out the *social principles inherent in the Gospel* of Christ and of the first generation of His followers; and, next, to recall "that there is an *historical background* which should be borne in mind

in any attempt to formulate the application of Christian principles to the practical problems of our own nation and of the present age." For, as the document [1] from which the above words are taken (and on which we draw freely throughout, often only with inverted commas in acknowledgment) goes on to say,

"It is the natural disposition of each generation to identify Christianity with those aspects of it which, for one reason or another, happen at the moment to receive most emphasis: to exclude and minimise as unessential or impracticable those elements in Christian thought which it finds uncongenial to its temper, or inconvenient to its habits or disturbing to its peace of mind; to place, as it were, its own gloss upon Christian teaching; and to regard that gloss as the only natural, sometimes indeed as the only conceivable, interpretation. Of the errors arising from that process of selection and omission, of over-emphasis at one point and under-emphasis at another, knowledge of the past is the natural corrective. . . . It should help to deliver the mind from undue acquiescence in the assumptions of the present, by offering a standard with which the present may be compared, and thus turn the flank of prejudices."

In our reading, however, of the past we must remember to allow for variable elements in it. Two variables of the first rank may be cited as examples of the sort of considerations to be borne in mind. One is the degree to which the Christian factor, the Church, has, or has not, been conceived chiefly as an institution armed with authority of

[1] *Christianity and Industrial Problems* (p. 26). The report of a Commission appointed in 1917 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. For the use we make of this document we have the full permission of the Chairman of the Commission and of the publishers of the Report, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

social discipline, whether purely ecclesiastical in its sanctions or with the added coercive legal power of the State. Church and State have acted upon society sometimes as rivals or foes, sometimes as allies, and again in relative mutual independence. Prior to the conversion of Constantine, the State's influence was totally lacking to the Church, nay, it was ranged against Christian society as such. In the Middle Ages the two were largely unified. Now the time has once more come when the Church is mostly distinct from the State, even where the latter is predominantly Christian in its sentiment and standards. Another variable is the form of organisation which has marked the Church and conditioned its social functioning at different times and places. Both of these are but relative elements in Christianity; yet they affect the degree to which certain principles have exhibited their distinctive quality and efficiency in practical working.

Christianity is a religion of the spirit rather than the letter. All attempts to embody the principles of such a religion in the severely conditioned form of 'working' social ideals and practices, adapted primarily to the special needs of special times, must needs involve a contingent or temporary element in the results. Nor is this all. Even the Church's social ideal itself was not given to it by its Founder in the definite form of a formal body of principles, but under the concrete form of a personal ministry amid particular and limiting conditions. In a word, *Christ's own social teaching is historical in form.* This means very much. For its practical applications, being primarily for the guidance of those to

whom He spoke, must be subject to the whole context of time and place, and so to the general historical law, 'things so being and remaining' (*rebus sic stantibus*). There is laid, then, on the Christian consciousness of every generation the unavoidable duty of interpreting, by the aid of the abiding Spirit of Christ, the inner intention of its Lord's essential thought, and of reinterpreting its present applications in terms of the changed conditions of its own day.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE SURVEY AS A WHOLE[1]

For the whole of this survey, the following may be consulted :—

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Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen, E. Troeltsch (Tübingen, 1912, 994 pp.).

See also the Bibliography at the end of the first of the above works.

[1] For Bibliographies of the several periods see pp. 25, 73, 95, 117, 158.

I

THE SOCIAL IDEAL IN CHRIST'S OWN TEACHING

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I. THE SOCIAL IDEAL IN CHRIST'S OWN TEACHING[1]

The foundation of Christian social ethics is the historical account of the teaching and practice of Christ, unfolded and applied in the New Testament and in the practice of the early Church. In approaching, however, Christ's own teaching and practice, we are met by a serious difficulty. For it is just in the sphere of civic, economic and political relations—with which our Conference most concerns itself—that the teaching of Christ is least explicit and detailed. This was inevitable, His special mission being what it was: moreover, it has saved His Church from the danger of treating what would necessarily have been, after all, relative applications as if absolute laws, binding on all Christians under all conditions. Yet His silence on certain social problems (such as slavery) is striking, and calls for explanation. This lies in the practical form of Christ's ministry and Gospel. It was *relative to a given historical setting* both of facts and of ideas, which it takes for granted, and also to a supreme religious crisis which set all human interests and values in a special perspective. This twofold historical situation conditions much of the form of Christ's social teaching. First, then, we must have before our minds—

[1] For Bibliographical Note on this section see p. 25.

(a) *The historical background implied in the Old Testament and Judaism.*—The background taken for granted by Jesus' explicit teaching as to 'the Kingdom of God' was fundamentally a given social order. 'Righteousness' is the best single word to describe the social doctrine of the Old Testament,[1] because of its religious tinge. As interpreted by the prophets, it included four qualities—justice, mercy, truth, and peace—each of them answering to some side of the social question, 'How ought men to treat each other?' The ground of the prophets' demand was always religious; they challenged Israel to be righteous *because* her God was Himself righteous. Social duty is itself religious: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." This idea pervades the New Testament also: "with good will doing service, as unto God and not (only) unto men."

Whilst the Old Testament idea of 'righteousness' had great moral power, for a time it lacked a due sense of the intrinsic worth of the individual, and therefore of his right to reverential treatment. And when this emerged in the course of Hebrew prophecy, it came through the individual's relation to God. A man, as such, is of worth to other men because he is of worth to God.

In modern times thinkers have taken for granted that men are 'individual,' and laboriously proved that they are 'social.' In Israel, and indeed in every ancient nation, the process of thought was exactly the opposite. Yet while in it the claims of society were axiomatic, at different times 'society' meant primarily different

[1] See *Christ and Civilisation*, ch. i; Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Society*, ch. iii.

things—the family, the village, the nation. In the last centuries of Old Testament thought, however, another unit of society began to assert itself—the world, or all mankind. But it was a mankind united by the common worship of Israel's God, now thought of as 'God of the whole earth' (*e. g.* Isa. ii. 1–4).

Here lies *the* distinctive social concept of the Old Testament: always and everywhere its social teaching is derivative: men's relations to each other depend upon their relation to God. Further, it is in relation to world-unity that the 'Messianic idea' of Israel, as God's Anointed Son and Servant, gains much of its social significance.

Jehovah, the King of His chosen people Israel, was also the Most High, to whom by right belonged the sovereignty of the whole earth, 'the nations' at large. Such wider unity as was attempted by any of these nations, by conquest over others, was based ultimately on brute force, not on distinctly human or humane qualities (see Dan. vii.). It was the special prerogative of Israel's God to inspire a true humanity in His own people, and through them in all men. The 'people of the Most High' was to become, by a special or supernatural anointing with His Holy Spirit, the vicegerent of God's effective 'Kingdom,' when He should in fact 'reign over all.' This is the message of the apocalypse in Daniel vii., where Israel is symbolised by a human figure, 'one like unto a son of man'—man as planned 'in the image of God.' Another aspect of the vocation of Israel is set forth in Isa. liii. There, in order to fulfil the function assigned to it in God's providence, Israel as God's 'servant' becomes fruitful for the blessing of others only through rejection and sacrificial suffering.

Here we have the historical preparation for the Messianic fulfilment of Israel's ideal vocation in Jesus as the Son of Man, in whom that vocation was representatively realised, and through whom as Head of the New Israel, the Church, it was to attain its final fulfilment.[1]

[1] This reference to Jesus as 'the Son of Man' holds good on almost any probable view of the exact meaning of that much-debated expression.

The 'fulfilment' in Christ's teaching of the social preparation in the Old Testament may be traced for each of the three ideas specially named—righteousness, the individual, society. Jesus gave the final definition of 'righteousness' when He selected and fused into one the 'two great commandments' of love to God and love to one's fellow. None has ever valued 'the individual' as Jesus did, the basis of His valuation being that every man is ideally a child of God. The final unit of 'society,' again, is mankind as destined to become the 'Kingdom of God,' the family of the universal Father.

(b) *The special perspective of Jesus' teaching.*—It was for a religious reason that Jesus left on one side certain of the social problems of His own day, even as He left most of its political ones; namely concentration on the special mission He had then to fulfil. But, further, the form in which His teaching appears in the Gospels owes something to another element in the historical situation in Israel, its peculiar religious urgency. This lay in the brevity of the provisional period before the crisis in the coming of the Kingdom which Jesus counted on in some form or other.[1] This perspective of religious crisis certainly conditions both what appears and does not appear as Christ's social teaching in the Gospels. What, then, we have chiefly to observe is its *spirit;* and this is to be found in the *emphasis*

[1] The substance of this statement would be accepted by nearly all historical students of the Gospels, whatever their views as to the degree in which current apocalyptic forms of thought may explain the terms and conceptions used by Christ and the Apostles to describe the imminent crisis in question.

on certain religious ideas which is distinctive of Christ's modification of the Jewish tradition on social relations, to which its particular *form*, as addressed to its actual hearers, was of necessity relative. This special form was determined by the time or 'season' of Christ's ministry in Palestine, *i. e.* the eve of the breaking in of the Messianic 'Kingdom of God.'

It must never be forgotten that Christ's social teaching is part of a message of 'Repentance,' a *radical change of attitude* to God and His will for human life which was needful to secure the setting up on earth of God's Kingdom or actual reign, on a new basis of spiritual reality. Relative to so unique a situation all was bound to be more or less exceptional, and particularly the relations of the two fundamental factors and values of human well-being, the physical and the spiritual—bodily goods and 'soul' or personality.[1] The balance between these had to be redressed decisively; and this at a period of crisis meant such emphasis on the higher values as necessarily involved exceptional subordination of the lower ones. There is indeed no ultimate dualism between the two, both being parts of God's method of producing human children.[2] But there is a real, though temporary and relative, dualism in their functioning, so long as the uses made of material things remains unadjusted to the well-being of the person as a whole. Accordingly,

[1] 'Personality' is often the best modern equivalent for Christ's use of 'soul.'

[2] See the Report on the Nature of God and His Purpose for the World, ch. ii.

the negative aspect of renunciation remains still present even after the positive message of the nature and relation of God and man, added by Jesus to the Forerunner's message, had given the call a new accent, and so turned it as a whole into ' Glad News ' or Gospel.

It was, then, *in a special historical perspective*, that of the inauguration in Israel of ' the Kingdom of God ' as the true order of human life, that Christ's social teaching was originally given; and so it must be read, to be really understood. This explains both Jesus' silences and the special emphasis in much that He does say. In particular it explains what is so challenging to the modern mind, with its concern for better and more equal social conditions, viz. Christ's detached attitude towards political, civic and economic interests, and His call at times to renunciation even of family life, for the soul's good or the Kingdom of God.

(c) *Some points of relative or temporary emphasis.*— Christ taught with such emphasis the spiritual gain of freedom from the entanglements of riches, and so the happiness of poverty, that His teaching on this cardinal point is apt to appear paradoxical. As, moreover, it conditioned all His teaching as related to economics and their place in life, and has affected Christian social theory and practice all down the ages, one must deal with this fundamental matter rather fully.

First, however, the problem must be seen in its true, that is, its historical scope. For us to-day wealth is no mere matter of bodily pleasures or of selfish use of material goods. Apart from the full normal enjoyment of the bodily senses (which Jesus traces to God's fatherly goodness), wealth affords means for the training of the

sense of Beauty and the thirst for Truth, and so is instrumental to the soul's culture. But in this aspect—one not usually present to the mind in Palestine, where art and mental development were not native interests—it was hardly a practical issue for Jesus' preaching. The issue then narrows itself to wealth as seen in a particular perspective, and to the question, How far, in such a setting, was Jesus' outlook on life ascetic?

The way in which Jesus viewed wealth, and so the whole economic order of society, is often misleadingly styled 'other-worldly.' It was simply an essentially religious view of human life—that of the soul's relation to God and its capacity for sharing His very life—at a special and brief world-crisis. 'First things first' is the true law of living. As to material things, which "the Gentiles seek after," as *the* goods of life, "your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Therefore worry not"—about them and their amount. As personal, man's real wealth lies in the quality of his personal life, not in the amount of his material goods (Luke xii. 15). Hence he can afford to sit loosely by them. Indeed, only so is he free to find or realise his true self as a person. Material 'possessions' are apt to possess the man himself; and wealth tends to be relied on, instead of God and His fatherly grace, for making life worth living. But to be poor is to feel one's human dependence.[1] It prompts the soul to look behind and above the material world to a Higher Power, and to rely on Him for its real good.

[1] Jesus has not in mind the grinding, demoralising poverty so rife in modern industrial life, but rather the lot of the normal artisan or peasant-worker.

So to do is to be at peace within. Earthly 'treasures' can neither give nor take away true happiness.

It was His own joyously sure possession of this religious faith and experience of 'the poor,' of whom He was Himself one, that made Jesus preach His 'Good News' of the Kingdom as first and foremost for 'the poor'—in fulfilment of the message of Hebrew prophecy (Luke iv. 18). But no more than the Hebrew prophets did He teach that poverty in itself is man's true lot. Rather the moderate sufficiency preferred by Hebrew 'Wise' men, the happy mean between 'riches' and 'poverty' (Prov. xxx. 8 f.), was probably to Jesus also the normal best. But relative to the needs of the hour, and pending *those normal conditions which it was the function of 'the Kingdom' to bring about*, 'the poor,' as most predisposed to respond to Jesus' message, were happier in their lot than the rich. For 'the rich' as such were terribly hindered from entering 'the Kingdom of God' (Mark x. 25 ff.), the blissful order of man's perfected relations with God, and with others as His family. Within the Kingdom of God, however, when really come, all anomalies, all dualisms in society—as a brotherhood or commonwealth of persons—must needs cease. Now of all social dualisms, that between rich and poor is the most radical and far-reaching. Hence as a standing breach of love, or deep human sympathy, it cannot accord with the perfected Kingdom of God.[1] When that Kingdom's coming is complete,

[1] 'The poor ye have always with you' ceases to apply just so far as the Kingdom has come.

men being completely willing and God's power fully in play, every anomaly will be at an end.

That the above view is correct, namely, that Jesus held no ascetic view of material goods as such, is further confirmed by two facts. First, He contrasted His own practice, as non-ascetic, with that of John the Baptist; and next He promised those of His followers who had left their homes or property for the Gospel's sake a fuller measure of enjoyment of the like goods 'in the Kingdom,' here and now—in virtue surely of its spirit of loving fellowship, which would make men share all their blessings. Strictly speaking, then, as is recognised by Troeltsch,[1] who of recent writers has gone into the matter most carefully, "Jesus' preaching is not ascetic." "There is no setting aside of sense-life and of enjoyment as such, no glorifying of poverty for its own sake." His teaching on riches is simply part of 'the religious radicalism' of His message of the imminent 'Kingdom of God.'

Thus "Jesus' ethics are heroic rather than ascetic." Such 'heroism' was tempered to human nature by the message of religious trust in God. From this standpoint there follows of itself Jesus' attitude to State, Society, Labour and Possessions. Of the State there is no talk. "The hopes of Jewish nationalism are decidedly denied": the 'Kingdom' is God's, not the Jewish people's—"even if Israel appears as the kernel of the coming world."

In such a light the industrial order has for the time practically no importance; while even renunciation of all goods may be for some the condition of closer attachment to the lot of missionary discipleship[2] proper. Relative to such a message, in

[1] *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1912), pp. 45 ff.

[2] Such is the true meaning of the case of the 'Rich Young Man.' It is a mistake, as Troeltsch observes (p. 46), to base on it any general view as to Jesus' teaching on earthly possessions. The demand for

its original historical setting, riches have no positive value, save as means of expressing love to others: otherwise they are a danger to man's true life.

Even in its earlier stage, when the prospect of its acceptance by Israel seemed fairest, this Gospel made appeal to the heroic element latent in all men. "Be ye perfect (disciples) after the pattern of the Heavenly Father," was its note. But as Jesus' ministry met with more and more opposition from Israel's religious leaders, emphasis on the call to heroism increased. Thus in the later part of the Gospels—to which the teaching on renunciation of *normal* social life mainly belongs—the conditions immediately in view are those of a crisis, both for Himself and His disciples—'not peace but a sword.' Only by His own self-renunciation, yea, even unto death, could God's people actually be redeemed or brought by Divine love to inherit the Kingdom and life eternal, for which thus far they were proving unready. In this path of fruitful self-renunciation Jesus called for the special co-operation of the more devoted of His disciples, those who were able to go all lengths with Him in proclaiming the Kingdom of God (see Luke ix. 57–62). Social duty for those so called to exceptional service was set in a yet higher key, of crisis and urgency.

While, then, all the social teaching in the Gospels, as relative to the supreme religious crisis of human

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their literal renunciation, as also of family ties, seems to have been exceptional, where the 'heroic' degree of 'following' was a fitting form of discipleship. 'Abstract teaching' on such a matter was alien to Jesus, who adapted His demands to individual ability to comply, and therein find gladness and peace.

history, calls for some adjustment to other and less exceptional circumstances, this particular part or stage of it needs special transposition into the key of normal conditions, before it is generally applicable in later phases of the one 'Kingdom of God.'

Such transposition has in part been made during the Christian ages; but in part it has not; for the need and its reason have not been clearly realised prior to the rise of the historic method of study.

"Distinguish the times, and the Scriptures will accord," said St. Augustine, in contrasting the teaching of the Old and New Testaments. The maxim is applicable also to Christ's differing sayings as to the social conditions and relations of life—sometimes more positive, sometimes more negative or world-renouncing, according to the different contexts[1] of His ministry. Further, 'distinguish persons' is also a needful precept. Naturally, too, such special conditions were temporary, though somewhat analogous situations may recur.

Our own problem to-day involves answers to such questions as these: What ought to be the *normal attitude of Christianity to social relations* and their progressive reform? Again, what are the duties proper to the exceptional cases? Until these distinctions are fairly faced, men's reading of the New Testament, and of the Church's experience in history, is bound to lead to rather conflicting results.

(d) *The essential principles of Christ's social teaching.*—Having thus reckoned with the historically conditioned, and so far relative and variable, aspects even of Christ's social teaching, we can now distinguish and deal with its essential underlying principles. These, as representing the spirit of

[1] These, however, are not always preserved exactly in our several Gospels, which here differ a great deal; so that correction of one by another is sometimes needful in order to reach the original setting and so the real meaning of Christ's words. Without this, impressions derived from reading the Gospels are largely confused and yield no sure result.

Christ's Gospel, constitute also the essence of *Christianity as an abiding leaven* of social well-being and reform. That Gospel is in itself timeless or 'eternal' in idea. "Christ views social phenomena *from above*, in the light of His religious vocation. He approaches them from within, through the development of personality. He judges them *in their end*, as contributing to the Kingdom of God."

But as ideals are the great dynamic of radical change, so this religious vision of what ought to be, as God's will, contained the real potencies of a new social order.

"Four great principles stand out clearly from His teaching. God is our Father and all men are our brethren. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Life is the measure of true value. All disciples are stewards."[1] The practical efficacy of these ideals, however, depends on their organic unity as rooted in the first of them.

Firstly, "In the world-view of Jesus, God was Father, all men were brothers: the relations between God and man and of men themselves were essentially the same as the relations in a family. *It was a social world-view. Family affection thus was made by Jesus the type and pattern for all relations between men.* Sacrificial love, such as might be shown by a father towards his children, was to be the redeeming force in our human world. That explained why the new type of life was to be established, not by physical

[1] *Christianity and Industrial Problems*, p. 27. The brief, positive exposition which follows should be read along with that in the Report on the Nature of God and His Purpose for the World, ch. i.

force, but by faith, hope and love; by gentleness, kindness, and mutual service; by the inherent power of truth and right." [1] In so basing His social ethics on the family, the fundamental social unit, Jesus went behind the predatory or competitive type of society, with its 'barbarian' ethics of force. This meant virtually a new type of Social Order for mankind at large, as one great family of God, with Jesus Himself as the typical Son and universal Brother.

Secondly, we have already seen the sense in which Christ taught that the Kingdom of God was 'at hand.' It was ready on God's side, in the coming of Christ Himself. But the Kingdom is morally conditioned, and so can actually 'come' only as men's wills are ready to accept the Divine purpose and inspiration. This aspect of the Kingdom, that of human responsibility for its gradual appropriation —at times by minor crises of 'creative evolution' (like growing seed, Mark iv. 28)—is the one to which normal Christianity belongs. "There is to be a Christian society, a People of God, a Church, which shall be the light, the salt, of human life. But this society is rather the means of realising the Kingdom than the Kingdom itself." It is the latter's embodiment and witness, a 'city set on a hill,' for all men to see. To the other, or 'apocalyptic' aspect of the Kingdom, as 'coming' by one supreme crisis, belongs the birth of the Church at Pentecost. Thenceforth the Church is clearly the primary fulfilment of the Kingdom of God; partly in visible

[1] So the sociologist, C. A. Ellwood, *Christianity and Social Science* (1923), p. 56.

form, as organised, corporate, institutional; partly in more invisible and personal form, as diffused in the souls and lives of its members. In both forms the Church is to Christ as a body to its head, the extension and visible expression of His incarnate life, in spite of all its human imperfections.

Thirdly, while the Life of the Kingdom is "life at its highest," personal "knowledge of God, *all human life comes within our Lord's purpose*. Life itself is carefully distinguished from the material means of living: the service of Mammon (wealth) is typical of the kingdom of the world," as an order of selfish life, alien to the love of God and man. Wealth is dangerous, because hard to handle without loss of sensitiveness to spiritual ends; and so moral "detachment from preoccupation with wealth" is ever an essential "mark of the subjects of God's Kingdom." The true riches are those of personality, manhood "in the image of God." Such wealth derives directly from God, as the Father of spirits; and makes persons sacred to themselves and to others. Even when the Divine image is not yet realised, its potential presence renders every human being the rightful object of love in the Christian sense.

Fourthly, then, "men are responsible for their fellows, and for the use of the gifts which they themselves possess." God alone, in fact, has absolute property rights: all human possessions, whether material goods or the mental ability by which these are obtained from God's store in Nature, are held on trust for His purposes of common good for His whole human family. Hence in every station in life there must be fidelity, and not least in the use

of material things. For these, though of lesser value and most completely 'Another's,' are the test of a man's fitness to be 'entrusted' with 'the true riches' of the soul, which are, under God, more one's own.[1] Thus in all relations, with material things as well as with persons, man "is capable of fellowship with God; and the dominion of the spiritual must be extended over the whole of man's life in the world." So too all the distinctions which cause division between men—possessions (material and mental), class, culture, nationality, sex—lose their divisive effect in the Kingdom of God, especially in the light of its Head, who could say, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."

Thus in all spheres men are to strive after the true life, alike for themselves and for others, in dependence on a living God. "Not self-development, but mutual service, is to be the law of human life." Love to one's fellow-men—that sacred 'enthusiasm of humanity,' inspired by faith in God's love to every soul of man, which the author of *Ecce Homo* rightly depicted as the distinctive Christian attitude, is the all-embracing motive of the Kingdom of God on its social side, as the Family of God. Brotherliness, then, is the keynote of all Christian conduct, as the earliest synonym for the Church, 'The Brotherhood,' amply proves.

At no point does the newness and profound social effect of Jesus' principles come out more manifestly than in His attitude to women and children. As a result, the estimate of womanhood has for Christians come to be recognised as a crucial test of the real

[1] Luke xvi. 10–12.

humanity of any civilisation. "The female sex," says *Ecce Homo*, "in which antiquity—Jewish as well as non-Jewish—saw nothing but inferiority, was understood for the first time by Christ. His treatment brought out its characteristics, its superiorities, its peculiar power of gratitude and self-devotion." Jesus' free brotherly (see Mark iii. 34) relations with women of all kinds in the Gospels make an epoch in the spiritual history of humanity. Henceforth woman was revealed as man's co-equal helpmate, not only in body but also in soul.[1]

Finally, and very characteristically, the social and the individual aspects of human life are treated as mutually implying each other in the Kingdom of God. This supreme good, as through and through personal, at once transcends and unites Collectivism and Individualism, as one-sided ideals in social organisation.

Such, then, are the principles or 'pattern ideas' by which a social order claiming to be Christian must be tested. In their light we have now to review the record of Christendom down the ages, asking, How far and in what ways has the special Christian society, the Church, applied or attempted to apply these master ideas of the Gospel to its own life or that of society at large?

[1] Compare the stories of the woman of Samaria, of Mary of Bethany in Luke x. 39–42, and of the woman in the feast of Simon of Bethany. In contrast to this, 'women, slaves and children,' were classed together in Judaism as on a lower religious level than free men.

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II

THE ANCIENT PERIOD

II. THE ANCIENT PERIOD [1]

(A) Apostolic and Primitive Christianity

Religious social teaching owes its special practical efficacy to its super-temporal sanction. Here Christianity means ultimately Christ; and His social teaching was made more effective among His early followers by their vivid faith in His person, as God 'manifest in the flesh'—full human nature. The Incarnation did away, in principle, with the opposition in man's thoughts between the Divine and the human, the spiritual and the material, and between religious duty, on the one hand, and moral or social duty on the other. Human life in all its relations became the sphere of religious loyalty, viewed as the filial attitude to God and His all-inclusive will of Love. "Be ye imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you." These words are St. Paul's preface to a detailed lesson in every-day social conduct.[2] Such religious faith 'made all things new.' The hallowing light of Divine and redemptive love fell on all human beings and the Christian's relations to them. "Thus the Incarnation is the inexhaustible spring of brotherhood."

(a) *The social life of the early Christian com-*

[1] For Bibliographical notes for this period see p. 73.

[2] Eph. v. 1 f.

munity.—The social life of primitive Christianity, marked as it was by an intense corporate unity, was the natural expression of a sense of sharing in common the Divine power. Their fellowship was 'in Holy Spirit,' inspired in the most literal sense. Springing from the love of God as revealed in Christ, it welled up as enthusiastic love of their fellows in this sacred experience; and the sense of 'community' (*koinonia*) or spiritual brotherhood with all such overflowed every barrier of self-interest, seeking the completest possible outward forms of expression. Thus, to those who were 'of one heart and soul,' it was simply artificial not to hold what each possessed, alike of spiritual and material goods, as for the benefit and use of all the family of God. "For if we are fellows in that which is imperishable, how much more in things perishable?" (*Didache*, iv. 8).

Such was the logic of the heart as inspired by Christian faith; and on this it acted, and at first without reflective reserve. Herein lies the social meaning of Pentecost,[1] the fundamental case of 'outpouring' of the new Christian experience. And as long as Christian social relations were viewed simply as one aspect of such 'fellowship of the Spirit' in the Community or People of God, awaiting the consummation of His 'Kingdom,' Christianity remains of the primitive type, of which the Apostolic age is the classic form.

There was nothing vague or sentimental in the way the earliest Christians understood and applied

[1] See the essay by C. A. Scott, in the volume entitled *The Spirit*.

the principle of brotherly kindness. To them "the Christian life was the true human life, and Christians become true men in proportion as they live up to it. All the relations of life, being baptised into Christ, become parts and particular modes of Christian membership."[1] "The sin from which they are saved is self-assertion in relation to God, selfishness in relation to men."[2] 'Fellowship with the father' implies fellowship with one another at every point of contact. "As we have occasion, let us work that which is good towards all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." All Christian living is Divine service, even the lot of slaves, who should perform their tasks 'with goodwill, as unto the Lord and not (merely) unto men.' For so, 'by showing all good fidelity,' they could in all things 'adorn' the Gospel in the eyes of those who as yet were 'without.'

'Love of the brethren' expressed itself within the Christian society itself by wonderful fellowship in the use of this world's goods. Besides the special case of the mother Church at Jerusalem, practical community in use prevailed in varied forms and degrees. One form was the 'love-feast,' both of the local Church as such and of a more domestic type. Christian hospitality and care for the poor were treated as vital. Further, while early guarding against abuse of its charity by idlers, the Church felt bound to find work for its members who lacked employment: "to the workman, work; to him

[1] Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, pp. 228 f.

[2] *Christianity and Industrial Problems*, p. 28: Rom. xii. 1 f.; Eph. vi. 7; 1 Peter ii. 18 (Moffatt); Titus ii. 10.

who cannot work, mercy (alms)." [1] Both were but forms of the justice of the Golden Rule. On the other hand, the piling up of riches was viewed as involving breach of such justice; and so, like luxury in the use of wealth, it was alien to the love of God.[2]

"Hence though there is in the New Testament," and in primitive Christianity generally, "no hint of revolutionary changes in the existing political and social order; though St. Paul and St. Peter enjoin loyal obedience to the 'powers that be' (unless such obedience clearly means disobeying God); very powerful solvents of the established social system were nevertheless set to work." For "the Gospel . . . spiritualises the irresistible impulse which draws one man to another. In this way it essays to recast contemporary society." [3]

(b) *Hindrances to its complete operation.*—Here we touch a serious question for the influence of the ancient Church on social relations. The fact that Roman law, while standing on the whole for justice and order, was severe on all movements seeming to threaten the State's stability by anything like anarchist or immoral innovations, was itself reason enough for not challenging certain social evils, due to a non-Christian lack of regard for the sanctity of human life. This explains the flagrant anomaly, as it seems at first, between Christian

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 10 ff.; *Pseudo-Clement to James*, 8; cf. *Didache*, xii. 3 f.

[2] James v. 4, iv. 1–6; 1 John iii. 17.

[3] Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 185.

theory and practice even in the New Testament, its acquiescence in slavery for the time being. It comes under the general rule, " Meantime go on in the lot wherein God's call came and was received " ; and so the Apostle Paul does not insist that even the Christian master shall free Philemon, a brother in Christ. If, however, a slave be offered his freedom, he had better embrace the chance,[1] since this is allowable even in pagan eyes, and will not be judged revolutionary. Such a policy seemed doubly expedient when the existing world-order was expected soon to be done away by the visible return of Christ. In such a perspective the risks of any radical attempts at reform of the whole social or economic framework did not seem worth running; while for Christians themselves the new joy and hope were enough to transfigure for the ' short time ' all outward lots.

Similarly the brief and provisional nature of the last hour of ' distress,' the darkness before the dawn (now practically breaking), settled the attitude of primitive Christians to all the normal experiences of life—sorrow, joy, acquiring of material goods—in a word, the use of the material world, and especially the married state. ' For the present phase of this world is passing away.' How soon it might be gone, who could say? The right course, then, was to avoid all needless anxiety and diversion of thought from ' pleasing the Lord,' during the few days ere His ' appearing,' by abstinence from the full normal enjoyment of the life of the senses and feelings.

Accordingly only to this extent, viz. as an excep-

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 17–24. The tense of ' use ' implies a single action.

tional measure for a brief season, was the social ideal of Apostolic and early Christianity 'other-worldly' and ascetic. Save for this, and until it felt the influence of non-Biblical thought, the normal application of its principles (apart from individual vocation) was quite different; that is, it acted redemptively on the whole of normal human life. But this, its inherent tendency, could not take full effect until apocalyptic millennarianism, on the one hand—which, unlike St. Paul, realised only the negative or brute-force aspect of the Roman Empire in coercing even conscience—and, on the other, the hostility of the Roman Empire, ceased to hinder its operation. By that time the spirit of primitive Christianity had already waned, and with it any instinct for radical social reform.

(c) *The Family the primary sphere of Christian influence.*—From the first, however, there was little to prevent the full application of Christian principles to the prime unit of social life, the family. Here the Gospel at once established its stronghold, and has maintained it down to our day. Thus social life was regenerated at least at its prime spring. This was true not only of marriage, but also of the parental relation, through the new sense of the sanctity of human life as such, even in infancy and childhood, and the spiritualising of natural love. "Fathers, avoid irritating your children, in case they get dispirited" (Col. iii. 21, Moffatt), strikes a new note of considerateness, even if it had a long struggle yet to wage with the old conception of absolute paternal rights (*patria potestas*), entrenched in human nature. Slavery, too, in the atmosphere of

the Christian household, lost its worst effects on self-respect and character.

That the regeneration of human society should begin with the family, was inherent in the very nature of Christianity. It sees in humanity essentially the earthly family of God, 'the Father from whom every family on earth derives its name and nature'; [1] 'For we are His offspring'; and God's paternity being the prototype of the human, with the full revelation of men's relation to God the true idea of the family began to be realised. As the Christian idea of God blends the notions of authority and love, so these two elements unite in the true Christian home. But older and more one-sided notions of authority were deeply rooted in men's minds, and died hard, especially as Roman legalism and Imperialism reacted in such a way as to obscure Christ's idea of God as Father, and of the methods by which His love seeks its ends.

(d) *Wider Spheres of Christian Influence.*—Here we meet a principle which needs to be borne in mind throughout our review. One can form no just estimate of the potential energy of Christian ideas, or of the actual energy generated by them in Christians, unless one reckons with the strength of the opposing ideas already in possession of the social order. Beyond the *vis inertiæ* of age-long pagan custom there was the subtly pervasive influence of the system of education based on the classical literature, ever by suggestion counter-working the new ideas and their social applications. Hence unconscious dilution, if not worse, of Christian ideas in

[1] Eph. iii. 15, Moffatt's translation.

their progress outwards, from the family sphere into the order of pagan society; and then tradition, so powerful in religion, came in to stereotype the imperfect work thus far achieved, and so arrest the leavening action of Christ's original Gospel.

Against this we have to see the early Church's care to educate its converts and children in social ethics. Pliny, the Roman governor of Bythynia, *c.* A.D. 112, reports that the Christians in their early morning worship "pledge themselves with a religious vow (*sacramentum*), not to any crime, but against theft, robbery, adultery, breach of trust or denial of a deposit when claimed." These ideals probably formed part of the instruction or 'catechism' in Christian living given to candidates for admission to the Church before baptism, in which they vowed obedience to the terms of their new service,[1] much as soldiers took the military oath of fealty. The old social attitude renounced was the self-seeking and 'over-reaching temper' (*pleonexia*), and the new was 'love of man' (philanthropy), as it is put in a primitive manual of applied Christianity.[2] Such love, as identifying a man with God's interests in his fellows, was felt to contain the promise and potency of all right social relations.

A Christian apologist[3] of the second century could claim, that 'Christians in their lives surpass the laws.' But owing to the illegal position of the

[1] Renouncing the old, as the 'way of death,' and binding themselves to the 'way of life,' as set forth in the *Didache*, i.–vii., and as Justin, *Apol.* i. 15 f., also implies.

[2] The *Didascalia*, Book I, written down not long after A.D. 250.

[3] *To Diognetus*, 5.

Church from the first (down to the time of Constantine), Christians had no responsibility for the laws, whether social or economic; and so could only make the best of such as existed, save within the special sphere of Church fellowship. But in 'the holy Church' itself, the 'law of Christ' and its ideals of beneficence and social purity—both rooted in mutual love—held sway, both in theory and practice, being upheld by corporate action and discipline. This appears in the conditions of admission to the catechumenate preparatory to baptism—including a long list of trades and avocations judged inconsistent with Church principles; and again in the withdrawal of 'holy Communion,' in which Church membership culminated, from those guilty of serious breaches of its essential loyalties.[1]

(e) *The social spirit of Eucharistic worship.*[2]—At the centre of this distinctive life of fellowship in Christ stood 'the Eucharist.' In this most solemn yet most joyous act of Thanksgiving, in memory of and in vital union with the sacrifice of Christ, the new Head of humanity, the Church offered itself as well as its gifts for God's service in the needy ones of His people—and even beyond its borders—as its 'sacrifice of praise.' Strikingly social in form, as well as in idea,[3] at the first and for some time after

[1] See 'Terms of Communion' in *The Early History of the Church and its Ministry*.

[2] It is outside our province, of course, to speak of other sides of the Eucharistic worship.

[3] Witness 'the kiss of peace' with which it opened, meant to guarantee that their 'Sacrifice' be not profaned by any ill-will (cf. *Didache*, xiv.).

(as the Love-feast, detached from it, continued to witness), this central act of 'holy Communion' never ceased to emphasise the social function of the Church by its solemn prayer of Intercession for 'all sorts and conditions of men.' We can trace this all along, from the close of the first century, when the Roman Church [1] asks that those to whom God has 'given the authority of sovereignty' may 'administer the leadership given them without stumbling,' and so obtain His favour; and begs [2] 'concord and peace' both for themselves and 'for all dwellers on earth.'

Further, by its witness to the thought, 'of Thine own we give Thee,' the Eucharist helped to foster the Christian sense of holding all—time, talents, and material possessions—in trust for God and for the good of men. This is the most radical and far-reaching of all social ideals and motives, and the one on which there is the most impressive unanimity among writers of the ancient Church. Nor is there lacking evidence of a wide practical response from the general Christian conscience to its calls, along the lines of duty to one's neighbour as then understood.

(f) *Certain kindred ideas at work in society outside.*—Before describing, however, the Christian view of life as a stewardship, something must be said as to ideas at work in certain non-Christian circles that were largely akin, in their humanising

[1] *Epistle of Clement*, 61.

[2] So Ignatius bids the Ephesian Church "pray without ceasing for the rest of mankind—for there is in them a hope of repentance—that they may find God. Therefore allow them to be taught at least by your deeds. . . . And be not eager to imitate them in return. Let us show ourselves their brothers by forbearance."

tendency, to the social principles of the Gospel. We begin to get hints of this in the Christian Apologists of the middle of the second century, who are transitional between Primitive Christianity and the earlier type of Catholic Christianity—one more naturalised to its environment. During this earlier Patristic period, from Irenæus to Nicæa, there was going on a process of largely unconscious mutual influence, the effects of which come to the surface only under the changed outward relations of the later epoch. To both, however, we may apply, for our present purpose, the famous aphorism of Rothe: "The ancient world built up the Catholic Church on the foundation of the Gospel, and in so doing built itself bankrupt." At this point, then, it may be well to notice briefly the chief ideas working parallel, as it were, to those of the Gospel, which the Church adapted to its own uses in varying degrees, from the latter half of the second century onwards. These form part of what a Christian thinker, Eusebius, later on called the general providential 'Preparation for the Gospel.'

The ideas in question, which cultured Christians came in time to recognise as of positive worth, as part of what God had imparted even to pagan society, were not those on which that society actually rested. They were what a small minority of philosophers, largely in protest against polytheism and many of its social fruits, had thought out and begun to apply to their own conduct. They were partly due to the shock to the narrow and only half-social notions of man—as separated off by race

and local customs into sections, each 'foreign' to the other—which came with the Empire of Alexander and its more 'cosmopolitan' culture. The universal idea of 'man' as man, which gradually emerged in certain philosophic minds, had also its religious, or rather theological, aspect in a monotheistic type of natural theology or monistic philosophy. This, for men of Platonic or Stoic culture—to name the two chief schools in question, amid the composite thinking of the age when Christianity appeared—lay behind all polytheisms. Thus a new sense arose of the value of the individual, as the unit of world-citizenship. Nay, it was to the universal 'city of God,' behind all that is local and relative in life, that man as man belonged by Divine ordering, according to the law of nature and so of God, as distinct from all variable human law of nation, race, or city. By this Law of Nature, then, as a synonym for ideal Reason, and its doctrine of equality among men as rational beings, the conventional laws governing the status and relations of the sexes, the family, slavery and even private property were all subject to testing and revision. Such was the social ideal shared by a Cicero, a Seneca, an Epictetus, and a Marcus Aurelius; and so far we seem to have already the theoretic basis for a world-wide commonwealth of humanity, a social order with strong emphasis on the individual and his self-realisation as a rational being. But in practice the Stoic could not think of any radical change in the actual order of human relations brought about by human initiative. His doctrine of Fate, or the conditions of individual life as fixed

by Divine decree, came in as a barrier to the transformation of society.

Here, then, was a parallel development and a potential ally. True, it lacked certain elements in the Christian view of the individual, such as his enhanced value *for others*, due to the Christian idea of God as personal and loving each and all, and particularly as revealed in redemptive action by the Incarnation and Passion. Such a comparison, too, by the method of difference casts strong light on the greater social efficacy of Christianity—as appealing to the whole man, heart as well as head—when compared with current philosophies, even the religious philosophy of Neo-Platonism, which, with the third century, became its conscious rival. Yet the Stoic philosophy had some practical effect on social relations through the influence of the great jurists of the end of the second century and onwards, who gradually softened the less humane features of Roman law. And it would be a partial view of the facts to overlook the contribution made by such a philosophic preparation for the Gospel, which came 'in the fullness of the time' as a supreme new creative power.

Indeed, much of the difference in the outlook of the central body of Christians on the world generally and their life in it, before and after this transition period of the Apologists, may be traced to such Græco-Roman philosophy,—a mixture of Stoic and Platonic ideas,—as the Christian Apologists adopt as common to them and those they address. Before, the outlook is Jewish and eschatological in form; after, it is largely non-Jewish and philosophic, in

terms of the Law of Nature as Reason, and of man as akin thereto, as a rational being.

So much it seemed needful to say somewhere, touching the widening outlook of Christianity, as from small beginnings, and often under crude enough conceptual forms, it won its way by purely spiritual means. By persuading the conscience and reason of man, it won control of the mighty Roman Empire, itself using force in defence of a social order the well-being of which it long thought threatened by the 'revolutionary' principles of an alien faith. Christianity overcame spiritually; but not before it had learned how to overcome its own limitations, its first and cruder apprehension of what it had received of God, and so to discern 'the soul of good' in that 'world' of which the first Christians were able to perceive only the evil or God-denying aspect. By the aid of this further light, the leading minds of the Church were able to see further into the nature of the Gospel and of the world of men, and to read more fully God's purposes in their mutual relations. Surely a lesson for all ages, and for ours.

(B) The Early Patristic Period: Irenæus to Constantine

What has just been said helps to explain the different attitude to the order of society, and the problems of social ethics, which marks the next stage of Christian development. It is more reflective and so more discriminating. Space will not allow of full

illustration. It must suffice to select as typical the manner in which the Church then applied its religious principles, especially stewardship in the use of all God's gifts, in its theory and practice as to property.

(a) *The Christian view of property, and the social principles involved.*—Here its basal conviction still was, 'We are our brothers' keepers.' Thus, even late in the fourth century, Gregory of Nazianzus cites (Oration xiv.) with approval an early, perhaps second-century, *Preaching of Peter* as follows:

> "Rich is that man who pities many, and in imitation of God bestows from what he hath; for God giveth all things to all from His own creatures. Understand, then, ye rich, that ye are in duty bound to do service, having received more than ye yourselves need. Learn that to others is lacking that wherein you superabound. Be ashamed of holding fast what belongs to others. Imitate God's equity, and none shall be poor."

So Irenæus more generally:[1] "Wherein any can do good to his neighbours and does it not, he shall be reckoned alien to the Lord's love." Such was the Christian law of life. The only open questions were, How most wisely? How, in particular, outside the safeguards of the Christian brotherhood?

The answer to the first was, "To the workman, work; to him who cannot work, mercy (alms)." Alms, too, were but a form of justice: "to retain more property than we strictly need is a violation of justice and not merely a failure to perform a work of supererogation."[2] This is stated by several Fathers, notably by Lactantius, whose *Divine Insti-*

[1] Frag. 10, ed. Harvey, ii. 477.
[2] Bp. Gore, in *Property, its Duties and Rights*, p. xiv.

tutes (*c.* A.D. 300) may be taken as the clearest expression of the whole Christian theory [1] of social justice. Justice is equity (*æquitas*) between persons, who as such have equal value in the eye of their Maker and Father. 'Do to others as ye would have them do to you' is essential justice, which is itself the bond of society.

"Its fountain head" is in piety, as dutiful knowledge of God: "all its force and method (*ratio*) is in equity." "He is ignorant of justice," in the full sense, "who has not religious regard for God. For how can he know it in itself who is ignorant of its source?" [2] None is to God a slave, none his master. For lack of such a living faith in one personal God and Father, the Greeks and Romans have failed to attain social justice. For they have many grades among men, extending from poor to rich, from humble to exalted, and are content to tolerate without scruple inequalities in outward condition and opportunity, ignoring the equality of essential human nature and of our birth into this world.

The spirit which recognises such equity between man and man is called by Lactantius *humanitas*, humaneness.

It is only such full and positive well-doing wherever need exists and one can help from one's own resources, and not mere abstinence from conscious injury, or aid given in exceptional crises, that satisfies 'that true and genuine justice' which Cicero dreams of, but 'the concrete and clearly expressed likeness' of which he regards as beyond human reach. It is just such a concrete ideal of justice that has been revealed and brought within the reach of

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[1] That is was typical of the ancient Church may be seen from quotations in *Property*, pp. 98–107.

[2] This conception Lactantius develops in a striking simile. Knowledge of God is to the organism of justice, or true morality, as the head to the body, the source of life and intelligence and all the virtues, if these are to exist in organic unity and vital energy (vi. 9).

man, according to Lactantius, in the Gospel of Christ, who has given absolute value to humanity as related to God, even in the most despised of men. "But in what does the principle of justice consist more than in this, that what is afforded to our friends through affection, that we should afford to strangers through humaneness? And this is after all afforded to God, to whom a just deed is the dearest of sacrifices."

From all this we get some inkling of the spiritual dynamic for radical reform which lay in the Church, largely inoperative during the centuries of repression by an alien State, until it had lost much of its original vision and readiness for insistent action. This lay in the passion for equity between man and man, inspired by what Lactantius calls 'humanity,' due to a sense of the Divine origin and destiny of all men and women. It is just what *Ecce Homo* called 'the enthusiasm of humanity' underlying Jesus' own Gospel. And just as the modern student of the Gospels saw in it the fruitful principle from which Christians were meant by their Master to deduce all social relations, so did the ancient Christian, writing on the eve of Constantine's adhesion to Christianity, see in it the one religion fitted to supply a better moral basis to social order than the existing State religion could furnish.

It seemed better to quote thus fully Lactantius' connected statement on Christian social principles than to cite isolated sentences from writers of various dates. One may add that, while viewing the devotion of property to philanthropic uses as a 'sacrifice' to God, the ancient Church was very sensitive about the means by which property or money was acquired. Thus it refused to receive for God's service—especially the relief of the needy,

conceived of as God's special 'altar' for acceptable sacrifices—anything made from morally doubtful trades,[1] or to accept as members those who persisted in them. Further, any forms of industry felt to involve over-reaching or oppression of persons were condemned. Among forms of tainted money the Church reckoned usury, mainly having in mind the poorer class of borrower in time of distress, who could ill afford to pay the high current rate of interest, and often fell as a debtor into the power of the lender.[2] The lending of capital on terms offering good chances of repayment was not then in question. In the matter of usury, then, we have an instance of the Christian conscience placing the use of property under the law of justice that is also sympathy. On the other hand, it illustrates also the fact that certain Christian judgments are relative to temporary economic conditions, and must vary with economic theory, *e. g.* of money as capital. As it was, interest on its use was sharply distinguished from house-rent; while the modern mind sees the matter more truly.

(b) *Limitations of the above in certain circles.*—So far we have been dealing with the more positive aspect of the early Christian idea of property and its social use. But there are certain limitations under which these ideas operated among Christians both under the Roman Empire and in the succeeding period.

(1) One of these was the feeling that riches as

[1] Cf. the *Didascalia*, iv. 5–6 (*Apost. Const.*, iv. 6).

[2] Cf. Gregory Naz., Oration xvi. 18, "Farming not the land but the necessity of the needy."

such were never allowable for the true Christian, even to administer as a permanent trust: rather let him divest himself forthwith of so great a danger to his salvation. This reading of Christ's teaching is implied in a tractate by Clement of Alexandria, who sets himself to modify it by boldly discussing the question, Who is the rich man that is saved? But in so doing he shows how strong was the other feeling in the Church of his day. And in fact Clement's own view was never accepted in the ancient Church, the possession of wealth being rather condoned as a concession—and a risky one—to men aiming only at the second-rate type of Christian life, as yet to be explained. To Clement, however, there was a type of rich man who realises the very highest ideal of personal social life. Everything depends on the motive, the attitude of will to wealth. To judge otherwise would be to make impossible even the habit of sharing one's goods with others.

"Wealth which benefits one's neighbours also is not to be discarded. For it is 'wealth' as being useful. It is, in fact, like some material or instrument to be turned to good use by those who know how. . . . Such an instrument is riches also. Thou canst use it justly: to righteousness it is subservient. For its nature is to be a servant, but not to rule. . . . So let no one do away with possessions, but rather the passions of the soul such as do not permit the better use of property, in order that, becoming noble and good, he may be able to use nobly these possessions." To those who have cast aside the passions of the soul which lead to abuse of wealth, Christ says, "Come, follow Me," as the Way in the use of wealth also.

Such was Clement's view of Christian duty as to property, even when amounting to riches. It was

not quite the primitive Christian one, which was relative to expectation of a near end to the present order of things; but it had at its heart the same idea of property, as a stewardship from God for the good of all within reach. "For he who holds possessions as God's gifts, both ministering from them to God the giver, unto men's salvation, and knowing that he possesses them for the brethren's sake rather than his own . . . not being a slave of what he possesses and not carrying them about in his soul, but ever labouring at some good and divine work . . . he is the man deemed blessed by the Lord and called poor in spirit . . . not one who could not live if not rich" (c. xvi.).

Thus the right use of property is simply the corollary of love, in the peculiarly deep and real sense distinctive of the Christian Gospel. 'Love buds into beneficence.' In contrast to such philanthropy stands the self-seeking spirit of greed (*pleonexia*), which readily attaches to the pursuit of temporal gain and prompts to doubtful methods therein.

Clement can find no Christian warrant for the man who "goes on trying to increase without limit, ever on the outlook for more, with his head bent downwards" (c. xvii.). The ideal lot is, in fact, that happy mean between riches and poverty for which the wise man of Proverbs (xxx. 8 f.) prayed, as best for the soul's welfare. Yet Clement does not feel called on to urge that this should be brought within the reach of all, so that every man might have the means of self-expression through the true use of some property of his own, rather than be dependent upon the charity of others.

Here we have one of the defects in the early Christian carrying out of the principle of 'equality' rooted in 'fraternity.' Even a Clement did not escape it, because he too accepted the existing order of society too much as it was, and not as subject to reform. On the other hand, he rose above the literalistic and purely ascetic reading of Christ's teaching current in his own day. But that reading was soon to express itself in the ideal and practice of a distinct type of Christian life, resting on vows of poverty and celibacy, and frankly cutting itself loose from the human order as such, in the quest of the 'angelic' or super-bodily type of life.

(2) Thus we reach the second of the historical limitations alluded to above, viz. *asceticism on principle*. This development,[1] with its pessimism as to the better possibilities of normal society as a sphere of redemptive activity, started from the world-renunciation of primitive Christianity, but gave it a fresh and even extreme application. Originally the attitude sprang from two causes, the one temporary and accidental, the other intrinsic. The former was the expectation of the speedy end of the existing order by Divine intervention. The intrinsic cause, on the other hand, flowed from the nature of Christianity itself. "The Gospel" being "the glad tidings of benefits that pass not away," "it aims at raising the individual to a standpoint far above the conflicts between earthly prosperity and earthly distresses, between riches and poverty, lordship and service."[2]

[1] With which, of course, we deal only as related to society.

[2] Harnack in *Essays on the Social Gospel* (1907), p. 9.

Such 'holy indifference,' in the interests of moral freedom amid all earthly conditions, tended easily to concentrate Christian effort solely upon winning the eternal boon of complete spiritual liberty for individual souls. This led on to the neglect not only of material and economic conditions, but also of ordinary social life and its duties. The process went on steadily during the first half of the third century in certain zealous circles, at first without severing those affected from their homes, philanthropic activities, and Church fellowship. They simply lived a more 'unworldly' and ascetic life, as spiritual 'athletes' in full 'training' (*askesis*) of both body and soul, or as soldiers on guard ('vigil') or picket duty (*statio*), in keeping with the general conception of Christians as an army on alien soil.

But by the latter half of the third century another and foreign factor was blending with the Christian ones, to produce the later or specialised type of the ascetic. This ideal, as well as its terminology, had its closest analogies among certain contemporary pagan moralists, who practised a like life of 'philosophy.' [1]

Thus Lactantius meets an outsider's objection that his teaching on property, as a stewardship for others as well as himself, would reduce a man to poverty, by saying, "What then? Even thy own philosophers praise poverty, and testify that nothing is safer or a more calm haven from anxieties." But already, half a century before he wrote, there were Christians living the 'perfect' life of discipleship, as they esteemed it—that of poverty and 'virginity' (male and female)—which they came to connect with the example

[1] See Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, pp. 148–152, 164–170.

of Christ Himself and of the Apostles.[1] This life they lived both singly and in informal groups, but, as yet, for the most part amid the social order of civic life, not in full 'retreat' from the world as 'solitaries' (hermits or monks).

It was when this latter stage was reached that the influence of the ascetic type of Christians ceased in the main to operate for the renewal of society. 'The leaven' was removed from contact with the lump to a degree not true of Apostolic and primitive Christianity. And though such specialised piety came later on to perform, both individually and in group-life outside society, valuable social functions, and so to influence indirectly the mass of mankind once more, yet these were only by-products of the ideal. The historic fact is that Christian monasticism, sublime in a sense as was its ideal (yet one shared with other and less social religions), began as a reaction by certain earnest souls against the Church's really increasing worldliness, and expressed despair of any attempt to regenerate the mass of those about them in and through the intercourse of social life.

Thus, at one and the same time, the 'salt' in average Christians was losing something of its 'savour' for the preservation of human life from corruption, and the 'leaven' in the most earnest sort was losing full contact with society. This bears directly on the new situation now about to arise.

[1] See the so-called Clementine *Epistles to Virgins*.

(C) The Later Patristic Period: from Constantine to Gregory the Great

(a) *Partial transformation of civil society.*—The changed conditions afforded by the 'conversion of Constantine,' with their unique opening for a new departure, came too late to be fully utilised. The moral dynamic of the Church's life as a whole was not what it had once been; and where it was intensest it was too specialised and non-natural in form to be suited to the task now open to Christianity, that of 'overcoming the world' in the new sense of transforming it socially as well as individually.

The key to the ancient Church's own conception of its function in society, and so to its practice, depended, as it still depends, very largely on its conception of society outside itself, and of God's purposes for it in relation to 'the Kingdom of God.' This must now be defined more exactly in relation to the new situation.

Christians had started with an overshadowing sense of the alien nature of human society, as animated by selfishness in its myriad forms, summed up in sensuality, greed of gain, and inhumanity in pursuing selfish ends. It was the sphere of the 'worldly' spirit in a sense incurable save by Divine catastrophic intervention. The notion of its gradual redemption, by Divine patience and self-sacrificing human love, inspired by God's own, had not dawned on Christians as in the counsels of Divine omnipotence, and so both possible and part of the Church's function in the world. This idea grew up only gradually, as the centuries passed.

On the other hand, Christians had all along, latent in their own Scriptures,[1] a distinction between the actual state of society and governmental order, as sacred in idea because by God's will fulfilling the function of public justice, however imperfectly. A positive attitude to society in this aspect was thus enjoined, and obedience to its authority 'for the Lord's sake,' wherever its laws did not clash with God's higher order as revealed in the Gospel. The enormous potential significance of this recognition of an ideal order of justice in society, as distinct from force or even of mere police order, merits most careful attention.[2]

Before the end of the third century the Christian estimate of existing society, as embodying an order that might largely be leavened, had begun to grow more positive. This process was now enhanced by the adhesion of the imperial head of the State. Thus the sense of the alien nature of the social organism amidst which the Church lived and had its being tended to pass during the fourth century, as the Empire became more and more Christian in profession, and paganism lost formal control of society and its customs, while Christian leaders gained ever more influence and even legal standing in the world of affairs. For instance, arbitral functions were given to bishops in civil cases and the right of intercession in criminal; while the fitting privilege of prison inspection fell to the clergy in the interests of humane conditions.[3]

[1] Rom. xiii. 1–5, echoed in 1 Peter ii. 13–15.

[2] See A. J. Carlyle, *The Influence of Christianity upon Social and Political Ideas*, ch. vi.

[3] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. I. 56 ff.

(b) *Social effects of Christianity in legislation and practice.*—The following are the main social effects in which the working of Christian influence may be discerned in this period. The arbitrary and often tyrannical action of the ancient *patria potestas* was greatly modified; and this took effect in legislation, including that prescribing due regard for the bonds of blood and family equity in the disposal of property by will. The marriage relation was raised by legislation, not indeed to the full level of the Christian ideal, yet markedly above its prior level for both parties. The vacillating legislation on divorce, as between different Christian emperors, only shows how strong was the old current against which the new ideal had to make headway. The general position of women, and respect for them, rose in proportion as Christian feeling—based on the attitude of Jesus Himself and of the New Testament generally, and but little supported by Stoic theory or practice—came to prevail. Even their legal 'tutelage' was done away with by the Code of Justinian. If in the Middle Ages their 'legal emancipation was in a large measure lost,' this was in the main due to reversion to the lower level here of the Teutons who overthrew the Roman Empire, and partly to the reflex influence of the Oriental view of female inferiority, reflected in measure in the Old Testament and even in a few verses in the New.[1] Sexual impurity, and particularly unnatural vice—one of the greatest evils of antiquity—felt the touch of Christ most signally; so with the exposure of children by parents, licentious and cruel

[1] Carlyle, as above, p. 5 f.

sports, inhuman treatment of prisoners and of slaves [1] and serfs. The actual emancipation of slaves was also encouraged as a religious ideal.[2] On the positive side, philanthropic and charitable institutions, to a degree and also in forms unknown to earlier times, even under Stoic humanitarian theory, sprang up on every side in this period—a feature of beneficence in 'the Galileans' which the Emperor Julian strove vainly to get his 'Hellenic' co-religionists to rival. So, too, the dignity of labour, which had long been debased by its association with slavery, was taught, and became illustrated, incidentally and as time went on, in certain monastic communities. Finally, the taking advantage of human need by usury was reprobated by Christian feeling.[3]

In all this we see at work the 'humaneness' of which Lactantius showed the religious springs in 'piety' to God and man. Behind these lay the idea that man as man, as a spiritual being, was made 'after the image of God,' and potentially redeemed by the Incarnation in Christ, the Son of Man, and by His Cross. Such a faith gave new sacredness to manhood as such; and the Golden Rule, apart from any specific words of Christ, implied the duty of conforming social relations to these religious truths.

Yet, after all, the changes wrought by 'the con-

[1] Christian influence is traceable particularly in the law's protection of slave women, and in the extending protection of the marriage of slaves by the Canon law of the Church.

[2] Though rather as 'a counsel of perfection,' or 'work of supererogation' conferring merit, than as a simple Christian duty.

[3] For the above, see Loring Brace, *Gesta Christi*, ch. i–x; *Camb. Medieval History*, Vol. I. 595 f.

version of the Empire' were not as radical as one looking back tends at first to expect. Why was this?

(c) *General and practical reasons for their limited extent.*—In the first place, Christians were too dazed by the very suddenness and wonder of the great reversal in their conditions to look round calmly and consider the whole new situation in the light of its wider responsibilities. They still felt the strain of their recent terrible struggle against the State. Then they had to repair the havoc wrought in their ranks, and restore their own discipline. 'The world' outside had its own governor, the Emperor Constantine, the chosen agent of God's providence to them, and surely also in the Divine counsels to all his subjects also. To him it fell to care for the order of society as a system of laws and institutions. Their part was simply to go on witnessing as heretofore, only with a fuller liberty, to the laws of Christ within His special sphere, His Church, and to set their own house in order by needful pastoral care and discipline, awaiting the further developments of the Divine purposes.

Ere this work was finished, the Church's attention was absorbed afresh by another internal problem, that of its doctrinal faith, in the Arian controversy. And this, be it noted, continued to distract attention from other and more normal aspects of Christian duty for most of the century. The struggle not only terribly divided the Christian society and compromised its influence; it also disabled it from giving its proper witness to Christian brotherhood and fellowship among men. This was quite obscured

by mutual persecution in turn. Moreover, the Church's own vision of the Christian life was thrown out of perspective, owing to the artificial prominence given to the intellectual aspects of faith, as compared with the moral, with which the social are most directly bound up. In fact the idea of 'the Gospel' was now changing a good deal, in emphasis at least.

This change in emphasis was the more serious that even before the dogmatic issue arose, and apart from its continuance, there was some loss of *morale* in the Church's consciousness generally. This had been so during the 'Long Peace' before the last persecution, both among the bishops (as Eusebius notes) and the rank and file; and as the Imperial patronage gave the Church more and more prestige in the eyes of his subjects at large, the quality of the Church's average membership suffered dilution. Hence the sensitiveness of the Christian conscience to ethical issues became less keen. It is, then, hardly surprising if most Christians seem to have been content to accept social and economic institutions as they were, without revising them in the light of the Gospel. For instance, in spite of their more responsible use of material goods as held in stewardship for God's uses, the idea of property as a social institution still remained pagan and, so far as embodied in law, Roman in conception, as though held by an absolute right rather than as relative to the common good of society.

Slavery, too, which even Stoicism thought an anomaly, remained unchallenged in principle and was even tolerated among Christians, in spite of the

reverence for human personality implicit in their faith. Similarly, it was nearly eighty years after the Council of Nicæa ere the human outrage of gladiatorial shows ceased at Rome, and that owing to the martyr action of a monk, a devotee to the thorough-going ideal. There were, too, oppressive laws and customs connected with semi-servile labour that continued under all the Christian Emperors, and passed into the Middle Ages, apparently without awaking much sense of incongruity in the Christian conscience.

The 'heroic' adventurous spirit of the Gospel of Jesus was no longer diffused enough through the Church as a whole to prompt it to bring moral pressure to bear on the Imperial system, and upon the public conscience generally, sufficiently to set on foot a radical change of all social relations alien to the spirit of Christ, even where there was no letter of His teaching that demanded it. But no less disastrous, both in practice and in theory, was the contemporary and partly connected 'retreat' from the normal social order on the part of the most zealous souls, in the interests of a 'monastic' ideal which meant despair of the leavening of society. It implied and enhanced the virtual dualism between true religious life on the one hand, and civic and economic life on the other. The latter sphere was in principle left by the model Christians of that age to go its way according to its own secular and selfish laws, as a system outside the redemptive control of Christian motives and methods, yet a system in which Christians at large were practically involved.

If, then, we repeat the question why the Patristic Church did not now transform social relations in a yet fuller and more Christian manner—why, in fact, it stopped short at amelioration and compromise with actual conditions, both within and without its own borders—the answer of history is a very complex one. Besides what has just been said, 'Christians' were at first, and indeed continued to be for longer than we realise, only a minority of the subjects of the 'Christian' Emperors. As statesmen, then, concerned to unify, not divide afresh, the Empire by legislation promoted by one religious section of the State, the latter were bound to use much reserve in carrying out any promptings to Christianise the statute-book. Further, Christianity, on its side, laid stress upon the soul rather than upon material things, and did not yet realise the full moral effects of the one side of life upon the other. Again, the very genius of the Gospel, as inspiring the individual conscience to free moral action, made the Church the less ready, at first, to employ the method of State legislation, which was alien to its own past habits of moral suasion, save for the restraint of flagrant wrongs and inhumanities. When, then, the changed relations of Church and State put it in the power of the Christian conscience to take upon itself fuller and wider responsibility for all social conditions affecting the welfare of men, it did not feel called to attempt to impose anything like its own ethical ideal on society at large. Nay more; the Church of the fourth century exhibited no new and constructive ideal of social and economic brotherhood

even for its own members, as it might have done by its own discipline, much less for the commonwealth at large. There existed a general assumption of the fixity of the social order as a finished whole, especially in the form of the Roman Empire. That is, the Church simply shared the conventional ideas underlying the existing economic and social order,[1] and the hand-to-mouth methods of dealing with its anomalies and evils.

The question as to the social effects of Christianity on the ancient world is sometimes put in the form, How was it related to the 'decline and fall of the Roman Empire'? Did it promote or rather restrain this process? It is this question which occasioned Augustine's *City of God;* and his answer still holds good in the main. The cardinal fact is that the Roman Empire was in decline before Christianity had the power to make its social influence appreciably felt. The decline was due largely to an external factor, the impact of barbarian forces upon the higher order of Roman unity (*Pax Romana*) and general civilisation, and to the inability of that civilisation itself to react to this challenge successfully.[2] The process of decay has recently been described and analysed by so competent a hand as that of Prof. Vinogradoff.[3] In the fourth and fifth centuries, he says, the process "presented features of decline and renovation at the same time." But the latter he regards as largely due to the Christian Emperors, especially Constantine, and their Christianising policy, which had construc-

[1] *Cf.* J. N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God,'* p. 53. "This sense of property, as of absolute *dominion*, has dominated modern Europe through the Roman Civil Law. Yet the other sense . . . is the presupposition of jurists like Ulpian and the Stoics. Their teaching pointed ultimately to the end of chattel slavery. It may point in the same direction in regard to extreme rights of private ownership."

[2] A. Schweitzer, in *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilisation*, Preface, is clear that any civilisation that has lost a constructive theory of life and the world contains the seeds of fatal decay.

[3] *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. I, ch. xix.

tive social effects, so far as the humanising and purifying of personal relations were concerned. Thus Christianity at least retarded the decline by contributing to the inmost factors of renovation. But the stamping out of political liberty by the Empire had led, in the mass of men, to a fatal atrophy of independent thought and initiative, both in political and social matters.

Here we touch a matter of far-reaching significance for our survey, viz. the form of political authority under which Christianity exists. Thus under an autocracy, however benevolent, Christianity could never have its social effects. For these seem by their very nature and methods (as persuasive rather than coercive) to depend upon the normal action of the diffused Christian conscience becoming freely and promptly reflected, as by a representative system of self-government of the whole community, both locally and at the centre of legislative authority. In this connection it is worth citing, in relation to the next period, Prof. Vinogradoff's observation that "society falls back (after the Empire) to a great extent on the lines of . . . aristocratic organisation" (p. 567).

On the whole, then, the Church continued, under and after Constantine, to view civil society too much as 'the world,' and with too little sense of its human values as conditioning the development of moral personality, with which it rightly felt itself primarily concerned. Society had, it felt, its own responsible head, as God's direct vicegerent, clothed with a Divine right as well as duty of government, for which he alone was properly accountable to God. To this idea we shall return in connection with the important modification of it which connects itself with the name of Augustine. Meanwhile we must consider the more general intellectual hindrance already hinted at.

(d) *The Church's lack, at the crucial moment, of a true theory of civil society.*[1]—We have seen

[1] This bears on the limited degree to which the Church has at any time tried consciously to Christianise society at large; and

that, even before the adhesion of the Emperor to Christianity, there had been growing up a new and more positive attitude among Christians to society at large. It sprang partly from long delay in Christ's appearing, partly from experience of the actual redemption of social life among Christians themselves. In particular mental culture —letters, science, art—in a word that Humanism which primitive Christians had regarded as of 'the world,' or at least indifferent for the good of 'the soul,' was being seen in its positive or ideal aspect. How far, then, might this progressive experience of 'the soul of good' in the existing order not go? If there was no inherent limit in the very nature of things, why should not the old gulf between the Church and society in the end be closed, and a free way be opened for continuity between the two realms, as indeed had happened in certain Christian individuals living in and through both the as yet unadjusted spheres? If so, must not such a social issue lead up to the realised 'kingdom of God'?

The answer given by the ancient Church was that this could really come about only 'beyond the veil,' where alone other dualisms of life here—between matter and spirit, sin and righteousness, nature and grace—would be done away. By no mere gradual leavening with Divine grace of the Holy Spirit could God's Kingdom really come 'on earth,' in the sense implied by the Lord's Prayer. It could come only on a supernaturally renewed earth, physically as well as spiritually.

must therefore be noticed here rather fully. The more technical aspects of the subject, however, are relegated to smaller type.

Still a certain change of perspective was in process, which marks off the Church's later from its earlier conception of the matter. After the fourth century Christ's intervention *ab extra* began to be transposed, so as to come not at the beginning of the Millennium but at the end—so ceasing to condition its character. This change was really a revolution, fatal to the social pessimism of the whole millennial idea, as it appears in the Apocalypse. The Millennium came to mean simply the invisible reign of Christ, through His Spirit, in the Church since Pentecost; its traditional Jewish form was taken only symbolically. But, then, how could any of its 'time and space' perspective be taken as absolute truth if it was only figurative, and so relative? There might be another time and plane of transforming 'the kingdom of this world' into 'the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.' To this no real theoretic answer was ever given. The new attitude, involving at least some gradual leavening of society at large, was simply a *solvitur ambulando* conviction that so it was in practice, and must be so in theory. The chief personal influence making for this silent revolution in ideas was Augustine, who himself began by sharing the older Millennarianism.[1]

As to the influences behind him in turn, besides his experience of the Catholic Church as a great social institution, naturalised in ever-growing measure within the context of society, there were

[1] See A. Robertson, *Regnum Dei*, pp. 170 f. The varying interpretations of the Apocalypse all down the Church's history are symptomatic of the contemporary social outlook, and so valuable for our purpose.

two others of very different orders. On the one hand, Neo-Platonism, with its idea of God as the Absolute Reality and Will, of which every form of actual being was the partial expression, as regards its normal nature and functions, but on different levels of reality or ideal worth; on the other, his own vivid experience of conversion, from sinful sensuousness to what he felt to be supernatural moral freedom. Of these the former influence made for a greater unity of relations between the higher and lower orders of human society, the Church and society at large, as both dependent for their being on God: the latter, for a yet sharper moral or volitional contrast, between the two spheres—human and Divine, of nature and of grace—as revealed in his own individual experience. The former rested on a monism, of a different intellectual species from the Stoic, but agreeing in effect with its theory of the Law of Nature, viewed ideally (apart from sin) as the normal standard; the latter implied a practical dualism, rooted in Original Sin. The result was a social philosophy of many-sided insight (though its Predestinarianism and traditional Ecclesiasticism were never harmonised), but one which lent itself to various interpretations—a fact of momentous significance for the social and political theories of the Middle Ages.

This positive view of the sanctity of the social order, as by its very constitution standing for Justice (as St. Paul taught), appears also in many Christian thinkers, especially in the West, from Clement of Rome to Ambrose of Milan, who saw in the law of Nature the will of God—however obscured and perverted by human sin. Into this tradition Augustine enters, but so as to modify it.

(e) *The emergence of a new Christian theory of Society, particularly in Augustine.*

We saw above, in speaking of the new element which entered the stream of Christian thought with the Apologists, that the Stoic philosophy of society made it the normal expression of the order of Reason, and of Justice between men,

as part of the law of Nature, behind all variable and imperfect attempts to embody this in actual laws and institutions. The true end of human society, worthy the name, was to Cicero, as to Aristotle long before, the common well-being of its members as rational and bound to each other by justice. Justice, then, to the best Greek and Roman thinkers was of the essence of society, which accordingly was in idea sacred, by the law of Nature as Reason.

Augustine's view of society, particularly in his great work *On the City of God*, takes the form of a contrast between the two social orders (*civitates*), the earthly (*terrena*) or mundane, and the heavenly (*cœlestis*) or spiritual. These two orders of society were not in their proper nature visible, but were partially represented by State and Church (militant or *in via*) as corporate societies, each of which actually contained both 'elect' and 'reprobate' individuals. Of these mystic 'cities,' above time and space, Rome, on the one hand, and the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse on the other, are the types. "The two, separate in idea, origin, purpose and practice, are yet dependent the one on the other, giving and taking influence. The *civitas Dei* needs the practical support of the *civitas terrena* in order to be a visible" body politic,[1] an institution with material possessions and social organisation, amid human society at large. "The *civitas terrena* —which actually (*i. e.* as warped by sin) rests on lust of 'dominion' or 'the will to power'—needs

[1] This and some of what follows comes from *The Cambridge Mediæval History*, Vol. I, 588.

the moral support (or inspiration) of the *civitas Dei* in order to be a real State," an '*harmonious society of men*'; for such a state "only exists on a basis of justice and love, and by participation in the sole source of existence, which is God." And this participation in the Divine life, and so in true spiritual values, is normally mediated to the lower and earthly form of society through the higher and diviner, that is, to the State through the Church (the two not being as yet really coextensive).

The ethical and social bearing of all this can best be seen by transposing it from the apologetic to the positive key, somewhat as follows:[1]

(1) First and foremost, man is social by nature, made for life in a harmonious society of men.

(2) 'Earthly Society,' which aims at earthly peace and prosperity (*pax*), is "a natural and therefore a Divine necessity" for attaining that limited good; and the State is its organised form.

(3) The benefits of peaceful civilisation, and justice needful thereto, are genuine goods.

But God's proper society, especially in its organised form, the Church, as possessing the higher values of human life in society (that is, in fellowship and unity), alone makes possible the true being of the lower *as society* even on its own earthly level. "For the earthly *civitas* has no resources of its own commensurate with its purpose. It can use worldly wisdom and worldly power, but it has no command over the moral life"[2]—no true moral, because no religious freedom of the will.

[1] See J. N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God,'* chs. iii, iv. [2] A. Robertson, *Regnum Dei* (p. 210 ff.).

(4) The two societies cannot really exist apart, but are complementary, though not on equal terms. As possessing in itself and immediately from God the vital social graces of justice (in Lactantius' large and deep sense) and love, "the city of God is the only real *civitas*," in the full Divine sense of 'society;' yet it borrows the authority and power of the other, in order to carry out in its institutional aspect [1] "the Divine purpose."

(5) Thus the two interpenetrate each other functionally; but the higher is destined to take up into itself all the positive or real values of the lower, *i.e.* its civic and legal order in things material. In the end the *civitas Dei* must absorb the *civitas terrena*.[2]

Such principles seem to rob the common order of society of its moral authority. But this result is largely averted for Augustine by his theory of the civil ruler, which meant the Emperor,[3] as holding

[1] Thus the civil authority alone can confer property rights, *jure regum possidentur possessiones;* there are no absolute property rights by the law of Nature, the fundamental law of God. Such is the regular Patristic view. Private property is relative and contingent on the common good of the earthly society, within which, as to temporal things, the Church exists; while in higher or more real aspects the relation is reversed, and the Empire is 'in the Church.'

[2] The opposite view of this relation, viz. that the civil society might so absorb the invisible or real life of the ecclesiastical society, as institution, that the human life of the whole social community should itself become the primary sphere of 'the Kingdom of God' (as, *e. g.*, Rothe held), Augustine could not even contemplate as possible, owing to his idea of Original Sin as inherent in the civil order since the Fall.

[3] Not that he prefers an Empire on principle to a society of small States, like a city composed of many families, a sort of League

his office drectly as 'the Vicar of God' (a phrase of Ambrosiaster's in the previous generation). That is, the *theocratic conception* of the civil magistrate (King or Emperor), inherited alike from the Old Testament and from the pagan Empire, served as link between the 'secular' order of the State and the sacred order of grace embodied in the Church. So viewed, the Emperor stood outside the law of Nature, in a quasi-sacred position as the Lord's 'anointed' representative in the mundane sphere, acting 'by Divine right'[1] of his authority over the material and temporal interests of men, both in State and Church (so too Pope Gelasius I, rather later). Thus the Christian character of the State really consists in the jurisdiction within it given by the Emperor to the Church, which then of itself works its Christianising by change of sentiment. And the State becomes true to its idea only so far as it becomes Christian.

Christian Emperors, then, while 'fathers of human kind' as in pagan times, are, so far as true to their idea as God's agents for justice, the sons and servants of the Church, and bound to serve its diviner ends.[2] "We have here the germ of the

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of Nations. The latter, in fact, is his ideal; imperialism, as the worldly principle of domination *in excelsis*, he abhors (iii, 10, iv. 3, 15).

[1] Here Augustine, or even Gregory the Great (who is most explicit on the duty of obedience to an evil monarch), probably has not in view at all what we should call 'unconstitutional' acts, since monarchy was then absolute in idea as in practice (see Carlyle, as above, pp. 81, 87 f.).

[2] The basis of the doctrine of 'the secular arm,' with the coercive 'sword' to be wielded at the Church's bidding, *e. g.* by coercing heretics and schismatics, on the warrant of the words *Coge intrare*.

mediæval theory of the Church [1] as the Kingdom of God on earth; but it must be noted that Augustine does not use Church and Kingdom of God as interchangeable terms, despite the assertion *ecclesia jam nunc est regnum*"—made in setting aside the Millenarian view that the Kingdom was wholly future.

(f) *General conclusion.*—On the whole, then, Augustine, like the fourth-century Fathers before him, accepts the order of human society as grounded in the law of Nature, and so far expressive of God's wise Will. But he greatly reduces its positive or optimistic significance by making it so radically corrupted by the Fall that the law of Nature ceases to be really valid for the actual social order save relatively, *i. e.* in forms relative to sin as inherent even in the laws and institutions of the State. These as a class, and not only slavery (as with the Fathers generally), are so incurably tainted by sinful lack of justice as to remain partly of the nature of penal discipline for sinful men. Hence no more than a minimum of justice can be expected from such an order of society.

Thus the 'Augustinian' theory of human life could

[1] The Visible Church, the home of sacraments, the *recognisable* family of God, in spite of its not being *coextensive* with the elect—the *civitas Dei* or Kingdom of God—bulks largely in Augustine's thought and language. "By the mere use of the terms *civitas* and *regnum* in a work of such momentous influence, Augustine prepared the way for the later development of the doctrine that the Church is a *societas perfecta*, and must have the powers necessary for any self-sufficing community. The conception of the Church as a social entity wielding governing powers owes much to St. Augustine. He did much to strengthen the Church as an imperial force" (Figgis, 71 f.).

not but check the Christian impulse to attempt to the utmost the Christianisation of the social order, and must therefore be esteemed a main cause of the Church's influence having been, especially at certain periods, less helpful to social progress than Christ's teaching in the New Testament would lead one to expect. It is true that prior to Augustine we have traces of another and more optimistic attitude to the civil order. Such an attitude seems implied in the famous prayer in the Gelasian Sacramentary, that, in and through His Church, God would, "by the quiet operation of Thy perpetual providence, carry out the work of man's salvation; and let the whole world experience and see that things which were cast down are being raised up, that those things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are returning to original wholeness (*in integrum*) through Him from whom they took their origin." A like attitude appears too in Ambrose's famous assertion of justice and humanity against the great Theodosius' passionate action as a ruler asserting the Imperial authority—a notable landmark in the history of the Church's witness to right in society; and also in his constant assumption that an Emperor will normally be true to his office as God's Vicar in civic justice—on pain of forfeiting his title to such authority. And it reappears in certain later Latin fathers,[1] notably Isidore of Seville, and passes on into mediæval Canon law.

Further there was in the West the effect of the deepening doctrine of Original Sin, as arresting

[1] See Carlyle, as above, pp. 93 f.

the reforming action on society of the ideals implicit in the Gospel. Not only did it lower the degree to which social righteousness might be looked for in human society; it seemed also, in Augustine's doctrine of 'Concupiscence,' to cast a slur on marriage as tainting, even in the case of Christians. This must have fostered the already strong bias towards celibacy, and so have lessened Christianity's social effect at the very point where it had all along had most scope to contribute to social reconstruction, viz. the family, and all it means as a basis for wider brotherhood among men.

And so we find already fixed in Augustine, alike in his view of the *civitas terrena* as radically conditioned, even as a social order, by original sin, and in his doctrine of the typically 'religious' life, the limits within which the social function of Christianity was to be discharged throughout its next great period.

To sum up, then. The later Fathers are clear on the duty of Christians to apply their distinctive principles to social relations up to a certain point. Yet there was a strong, perhaps a growing tendency, to make the State itself responsible for the degree to which social justice did or did not mould laws and customs, and not to press for progressive approximation to Christ's full principles in that sphere.[1]

[1] The following, based on Troeltsch, may help to bring out further some features of Patristic thought and connect them with later developments.

As regards the Christian theory of Natural Law (as modified by the Fall) and of Theocracy—an idea first developed in the Church itself—the *twofold* nature of the latter gives Augustine's whole

theory of society a certain ambiguity, with momentous issues of like kind for the future. Theocracy and Natural Law both in common consecrate the State: what the one could not do, the other could; and the Emperor in any case is primarily determined by 'Grace of God' and his theocratic dependence. The State itself, however, remains the essence of the world. But this issued in leaving the social order much as it was. Another outcome was, that there was also assigned to the law of Nature the Theocracy in the Churchly form of society, set over even the temporal power or Imperial office. On the other hand, social and political elements became incorporated and assimilated into the Church through the Christian theory of Natural law. But in 'natural law' there remains at bottom the Stoic rationalism, with its conception of Nature as kernel of the conception of God and the natural 'equality' of all reasoning beings. From this foundation principle rationalist reactions will arise, till in the seventeenth century they dissolve the Churchly civilisation. This, as unity-civilisation (such as marks the Middle Ages), was possible only through 'theocracy' and Christian 'natural law'—sin being neutralised by supernatural Christian grace.

In this later light we see the earlier issues made clear. The sociological force of Christianity is confined to the Church; the social and political life is accepted in a Churchly sense. Thereby the old ideal of the Gospel—the 'anarchy' of 'faith,' responsible to and serving God alone, the boundless worth of the free soul, and the outflow of the Divine love in brotherly love—seems certainly to have disappeared or been impaired; but it survives in ideas and institutions, yet under a greatly changed form.

It survives in—

(i) The Church itself.

(ii) The idea of the original state of man by creation, and the absolute law of Nature, "in which ever anew the ideal of Freedom, Oneness with God, Equality, and Love towards God and in God, are made imaginable."

(iii) Monasticism. "This is in origin a very complex phenomenon . . . but in its working nothing else than the asylum into which the old Christian ideal has fled, from the mixed ecclesiastical sphere of semi-worldly and semi-ascetic ethics."

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III

THE MIDDLE AGES

III. THE MIDDLE AGES [1]

"As the teaching of the Fathers contributed one element to the intellectual background of the mediæval Church, it had an importance extending beyond the centuries in which it was formulated and the particular conditions to which it primarily referred. What effect, if any, such conceptions had upon practical conduct, either when they were first developed or in later periods of history; how far, if at all, the Christian tradition influenced political and economic conduct and modified social relationships in what are called the Middle Ages, are questions to which very different answers are given by different authorities. The mediæval Church did not speak with one voice, and it is easy, by selecting witnesses, to present a picture which is consistent with itself, but untrue to the facts." [2]

The Middle Ages may be divided into two distinct periods, sharply divided by the work of Hildebrand. In the first the unity of the Church is an ideal; in the second (in Western Europe) a reality.

[1] For Bibliographical Notes for this period see p. 95.

[2] *Archbishops' Report*, p. 32.

(A) Before Hildebrand

In the first period the ecclesiastical bodies assist in building up the various secular states which emerged from the ruins of the Roman Empire (*e. g.* the work of Theodore of Tarsus in England); the Church works hand in hand with the secular power; its position is somewhat that of a tutor to a young squire. In this formative and educative stage the Church imposes some restraint on anarchy by proclaiming under religious sanction the Truce of God on certain days of the week, and by organising local public opinion to enforce it. Christian principles are infused into the traditional 'barbarian' laws. Thus Charlemagne forbids the blood-feud. "How can anyone hope to be pleasing to God who has slain His son? How can anyone believe that Christ will be gracious to him who has slain His brother?"[1] The laws of Ethelred II ordain "that Christian men and uncondemned be not sold out of the country, and especially into a heathen nation, that those souls perish not which Christ bought with His own life"; "that Christian men be not condemned to death for all too little, and in general let light punishments be decreed and let not for a little God's handiwork and His own purchase which He dearly bought be destroyed."[2]

It will be noted that slavery is recognised, but some attempt is made to mitigate its harshness.

[1] Henderson, *Select Historical Documents*, p. 198.
[2] Quoted by Cutts, *Parish Priest*, p. 172.

Freedom from work on Sundays was the right of all men; but in Anglo-Saxon times masters were invited for the love of God—not commanded—to allow their slaves relaxation from labour on other great festivals of the Church.[1]

The early monastic communities were in one respect self-supporting agricultural and industrial communities, and did something to establish the dignity of labour, not only among themselves but in the eyes of the world. The principle that work is prayer—*laborare est orare*—was applicable to a wider field. The old story of the honest labourer casting out devils who had defied the professional saint came originally from the hermits of the African desert, but it remained a popular tale to enforce a moral throughout the Middle Ages; and it was from a sermon ascribed to a sixth-century monk that a Franciscan of the fourteenth century adapted his praise of labour: "Work is the life of man and the guardian of health; work drives away all occasion of sin and makes a man sleep well at night; work is the relief of weariness, the strength of sickness, the salvation of men—quickener of the senses, foe of sloth, nurse of happiness—a duty in the young, a merit in the old." [2]

In this period arose the close relation, often amounting to identity, between the areas of secular and ecclesiastical administration. In England the shire bishop sat side by side with the ealdorman in the shire moot; the parish generally coincided

[1] This privilege, partly owing to the disappearance of pure slavery, was later extended to all classes, free and serf alike.

[2] Little, *Studies in English Franciscan History*, p. 156.

with the township or groups of townships which formed the administrative and economic unit, and the parish priest might head 'the four good men' who attended the 'hundred' court and who are the basis of the representative system, or even lead his parishioners in defensive war. A proportion—a third or a fourth—of the goods of the Church was assigned in each parish to the maintenance of the poor—a practice which died out in the later Middle Ages, to be revived in another form at the end of the sixteenth century. The strands of religious social, economic, political life were so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them. On national festivals plays and fairs and merrymakings were held in the churchyard, and continued to be held in spite of later episcopal prohibitions. Religious life permeated the world: the world permeated religious life.

(B) Hildebrand and After

The secularisation of the Church, or rather of the local churches, the employment of bishops and abbots as officials of the secular power, led to Hildebrand's assertion of the unity of the universal Church under one head and one law, its independence of and ultimate supremacy over the State. It was even asserted that the secular power, founded on violence, only acquired legitimate authority when it acted as the handmaid of the Church. The conflict which ensued dominated the rest of the Middle Ages, but the Middle Ages failed to find a satisfactory solution. The mediæval Church was

also a universal state; and spiritual and secular powers too often claimed exclusive and mutually destructive allegiance in the same sphere.

(a) *The Church and Society.*—The Church remained ideally a purely spiritual body—the union of all the faithful, past, present and to come: but this was an ideal unrealisable in time and space, and General Councils were a sorry image of it. In its conflict with the secular power, the Church was the whole body of ecclesiastics, who claimed and maintained immunity from secular jurisdiction, and claimed, but on the whole failed to maintain, immunity from secular taxation. The assertion of both these privileges was a source of constant disputes. The statement that "the privileges of the Church were the liberties of the people" is true of certain periods, when the Church on the ground of its privileges led a general resistance to irresponsible tyranny. But such periods were exceptional. The privileges of the clergy by promoting a dualism within the law of the Christian *Respublica*—as between clergy and laity—in the long run promoted injustice, ill-will, dissension. The English Parliament in 1513 passed an Act which deprived clerks in minor orders who were guilty of murdering, robbing churches and housebreaking, of their clerical privileges (Parliament did not yet venture to touch criminals who were in holy orders). The Act was denounced as contrary to the law of God and the liberties of the Church. A Franciscan defended the Act, arguing that "it was not against the liberty of the Church, because it was for the weal of the whole realm." He was called before Con-

vocation, as " it was thought that he had fallen under suspicion of heresy." [1]

But there was no clear-cut division between the two spheres—secular and spiritual. If 'he that is spiritual' (*i. e.* the ecclesiastical person) 'is judged by no man,' yet he 'judgeth all things.' Ecclesiastical Courts touched every individual. Ecclesiastical and civil areas of administration (as already pointed out) generally coincided. Royal officials were usually ecclesiastics: the surest way to promotion in the Church lay through the service of the State. Becket as Chancellor did much to build up the royal power which as Archbishop he resisted.

Then, too, the Church was indissolubly bound up in the framework of society. Most local ecclesiastical bodies were to a greater or less extent landlords, and were bound to maintain the rights of property which belonged to God and His saints. " The ecclesiastical landowner, like the lay landowner, bought and sold serfs when he bought and sold land: " [2] he was generally under less temptation than his lay neighbour to sell such rights and property for an immediate profit, and was in duty bound as trustee for a higher power to give nothing away: if he emancipated serfs he would be giving away the property of God. The early Cistercians made a protest against serfdom: they refused to hold serfs and tried to substitute cultivation by lay brothers—men who voluntarily (but irrevocably) adopted a life of celibacy and labour; but the system was a failure; and even before it failed the

[1] *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, II, Nos. 1313, 1314.

[2] Cf. *Archbishops' Report*, p. 33.

Cistercians were accepting grants of manors and serfs without hesitation. Bishops and monasteries were the strongest opponents of the communal movement which turned serfs into free citizens.

The mediæval Church's view of society, as of religion, was static. The possibility of extensive social changes was hardly conceived, and those who thought of State and Church as progressive communities tended to become more or less definitely heretical or, at least, anti-clerical.[1] It was rarely recognised that Christianity introduced new social relations except in the directly moral and personal sphere. St. Thomas Aquinas, who occasionally seemed to approach the idea of progress, declared definitely: "The new law should add nothing to the old with regard to external obligations." [2]

(b) *The Church and economic life.*—The Church generally accepted the current ideals as to the status of classes, their relations and their duties to one another, and it strove for the realisation of those ideals in practice—on all sides and in all departments of life. The Church instructed its ministers to see that each class carried out its duties to those above or below it. In the confessional the priest was to ask barons, knights, mayors and judges, whether they had made any ordinances contrary to the liberties of the Church, whether they had always done justice, whether they had oppressed their subjects by imposing undue taxes or exacting undue services. Merchants and shopkeepers were to be questioned

[1] Cf. *Archbishops' Report*, p. 33.

[2] "Lex nova super veterem addere non debuit circa exteriora." *Summa*, 1*a*, 2*æ*, qu. 108, art. 2.

about usury (open or concealed), fraudulent sales, false weights and measures; farmers and labourers about theft, withholding payments due to their masters, and encroaching on their neighbours' lands. The priests shall interrogate every penitent according to his rank or occupation; and on Sundays and festivals, priests should preach against the sins specially prevalent among the people committed to their charge.[1] These instructions are taken from synodal statutes adopted in several provinces in the south of France towards the end of the thirteenth century. It is impossible to test how far they were carried out in the confessional. The sermons of Berthold of Ratisbon and Bernardino of Siena (which enjoyed a wide popularity among preachers) show that the spirit of the instructions was acted on in Germany and Italy in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. And in the fourteenth century the teaching of Chaucer's parson is typical of the thought of mediæval churchmen upon rural relationships. "Of covetousness come these hard lordships, through which men be destroyed by tallages, customs and carriages, more than their duty or reason is. And eke they take of their bondmen amercements, which might more reasonably be cleped extortions than amercements. . . . Certes these lordships do wrong, that bereave their bondfolk things they never gave them. . . . Lords should not glorify themselves in their lordships, since by natural condition they be not lords of thralls, for that thralldom cometh first by the desert of sin. . . . These that thou clepest thy thralls

[1] Printed by Martène, *Thes. Nov. Anecd.*, iv, 696–7, 768.

be God's people, for humble folk be Christ's friends. . . . Think eke that of such seed as churls spring, spring lords. As well may the churl be saved as his lord. The same death that taketh the churl, such death taketh the lord. Therefore, I rede, do right so with the churl as thou wouldest that thy lord did with thee, if thou wert in his plight. Every sinful man is a churl of sin. . . . I wot well there is degree above degree, as reason is, and skill it is that men do their devoir, thereas it is due. But certes, extortions and despite of your underlings is damnable." [1]

The question of the 'just price' is not specially mentioned in the instructions to confessors cited above, and it must often have been difficult to settle even in the simple conditions of mediæval industry and trade. It is, however, one of the 'exteriora' discussed and decided by St. Thomas Aquinas on the distinctly Christian principle, 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' [2] It cannot be said that his discussion gives much light on the practical application of this principle: the price should be such as to yield equal advantage to buyer and seller. In discussing the lawfulness of trade Aquinas is more illuminating: [3] trade for mere gain is base; trade undertaken with the object of supplying the needs of the community is not only lawful but highly honourable — the merchant looking upon the gain not as the end but as the reward of his labour. Thus economic conduct is one branch of moral conduct: economic activities are

[1] Chaucer, *The Persones Tale*, §§ 64–66.

[2] *Summa*, 2a, 2æ, qu. 77, art. 1. [3] *Summa*, 2a, 2æ, qu. 99, art. 4.

judged rather according to motives than by results.

The condemnation of usury by the Church [1]—that is, the taking of any interest for a loan of money (or of anything whose price may by measured in money)—was based partly on the Bible, partly on Aristotle, partly on practical experience of the effects of moneylending in a community composed predominantly of peasants, and partly on natural law. "To wish, like the usurer, to live without labour is contrary to nature." But when from the twelfth century onwards Europe began to live less from hand to mouth, to trade in far countries, to construct great buildings, loans became essential; and it was equally 'contrary to nature' to expect a particular kind of service to be given without reward. The Church, after perhaps some hesitation,[2] refused to recast its teaching in the light of altered circumstances, but admitted a good many modifications. Thus, though a loan must be gratuitous to start with, the lender could claim compensation for any loss which he sustained from a delay in repayment. Similarly, a man who invested money in an enterprise was entitled to a share in the profits, provided that he also shared in the risk; he was not entitled to a fixed rate of interest whatever the result of the venture—that would be usury. So usury was defined by the mayor and aldermen of London in 1390 as "lending to any person gold or silver to receive gain thereby for certain, without

[1] The Civil Law, of course, admitted the legality of interest.

[2] Cf. Coulton's article, 'An Episode in Canon Law,' in *History*, vi., 67–76.

risk." [1] This brought usury within narrow bounds, and opened the door for most business transactions. Whether the principle covered Government loans bearing regular interest—such as the Italian cities habitually raised—was a question fiercely debated in the fifteenth century and answered in different ways. The Canonist doctrine had not arrived at a clear-cut principle distinguishing between the legitimate and illegitimate use of money-power. Many secular powers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries issued licences to moneylenders, who were allowed to charge interest. Ecclesiastical courts dealt with cases of usury only when clerks were concerned. Preachers such as Bernardino of Siena continued to attack the whole system root and branch. But it is evident from the denunciation of strict moralists that absolution for the sin of usury could be obtained on easy terms. It was, however, admitted on all sides that business relations were subject to the moral law; and the sharp dualism between personal conduct—the sphere of morality—and economic transactions—the sphere of objective laws—which is so marked a feature of later thought, either was unintelligible to mediæval writers or was denounced by them. "Limited by various qualifications as to different kinds of contracts, the general denunciation of usury was directed against almost any inequitable bargain, not only between borrower and lender, but between buyer and seller, landlord and tenant. It was the classical example of 'unreasonable covetousness,' a general heading to which all minor Economic

[1] Ashley, *Economic History*, I, pt. ii, 425.

offences were referred. Nor were these conceptions mere theories. Municipal records show that they were the assumptions of plain men who sat on juries and made good ordinances for the government of boroughs. They had practical foundations in the economic circumstances of village and town. What the Church did was to work them into a system, by relating even the details of economic life to the universal principles of the Christian Faith. . . . That is not to say, of course, that these principles were not often abandoned in practice. But in abandoning them men knew they were acting wrongly and were known to be so acting by their neighbours."[1]

(c) *The Church and political life.*—The Empire and the Church were the two chief institutions which kept alive the idea of the unity of Western Christendom. The fall of the Empire, and the failure of all attempts to revive it either as a fact (*e. g.* by Frederick II) or as an ideal (*e. g.* by Dante), left the Church as the only embodiment of that unity.

The Pope as head of the Church occupied a unique international position. He continually acted as peacemaker and arbitrator in international and domestic conflicts—intervening by his legates, now on his own initiative, now at the request of one or more of the parties concerned. We find the Pope taking measures to avert war, negotiating truce, commanding the cessation of hostilities under threat of excommunication and interdict, arranging diplomatic marriages, settling boundary disputes and

[1] *The Archbishops' Report*, pp. 37–8.

succession questions, creating a pacific public opinion by means of sermons and prayers.

One of the best-known episodes in the political history of the Papacy is the arbitration of Boniface VIII between Edward I of England and Philip IV of France in 1298. Though Boniface in his award speaks as Pope, the rival kings consented to his intervention only as a private person. This illustrates one of the weaknesses of the Pope as arbitrator —the tendency to encroach on the rights of secular States, to claim sovereignty or suzerainty over them, and to treat the rulers as his vassals. It was the inevitable result of the Church being also a State.

The Pope further, besides being Vicar of Christ and head of the Church, was a territorial ruler; and where his temporal interests were concerned he could not be regarded as an impartial judge, and was, in fact, frequently a fomenter of war and rebellion (*e. g.* in the struggle against the Hohenstauffen). On the other hand, without political independence he might easily become a tool in the hands of one power or faction. Subservience to France in the fourteenth century, and absorption in Italian politics in the fifteenth, were alike fatal to the Papacy as an international arbitrator.

The great aim of the foreign policy of the Papacy was to unite Christendom in Crusades against Mohammedanism. And the Crusades gave the Church the opportunity (of which it fully availed itself) of enlisting the spirit of adventure in the service of religion (*cf.* Boy Scout movement): knighthood became a semi-religious institution and

gradually assimilated or produced the various ideals which are summed up in the word chivalry. Dynastic and personal rivalries and growing national differences were difficult, perhaps insuperable, obstacles to the success of the Crusades; but the divisions of Christendom into the Eastern and Western Churches made union and even co-operation impossible. A Church which claimed universality could not recognise a similar institution, whether as a legitimate rival or a colleague, without stultifying its claims. The principle enunciated by Boniface VIII, "that it is altogether necessary for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff," [1] admitted of no geographical limitation.

There were not wanting Churchmen who protested not against the Crusades but against the substitution of force for missionary effort.[2] Their warnings were justified. The Crusades against Mohammedans familiarised public opinion of the later Middle Ages with the idea of using force against other forms of belief when argument failed. The Albigensian Crusade was the first example of this new development and led directly to the establishment of the Papal Inquisition.

The attempt to control not the actions but the secret thoughts and beliefs of men led to the development of a procedure which has justly called forth the execration of mankind. The difficulty of securing proof was met by the systematic use of torture both of prisoners and witnesses, and the

[1] In the Bull, *Unam Sanctam*, A.D. 1302.

[2] See *e. g.* Adae de Marisco Epistolæ (*Monumenta Franciscana*, I, pp. 416, 434–6.

theory of ' suspicion of heresy ' was invented, so that the accused who could not be convicted of the crime laid to his charge might be punished for being suspected of it. In those countries where the Inquisition was established the secular power, save for some brief protests and revolts, acted as the humble servants of the Church in carrying out the sentences of the Holy Office, and incorporated the methods sanctioned by the Church in the ordinary criminal jurisprudence.[1] It is significant that, when for a few months the Papal Inquisition functioned in England to secure the condemnation of the Templars, the inquisitors were compelled to get a special permission from the king to use torture, as it was contrary to the laws of England.

(d) *The Church and education.*[2]—The destruction of the old civilisation threw on the Church, as in some sort the heir of that civilisation, the duty of providing education. In the earlier periods of the Middle Ages the duty was (with some exceptions) rather imposed on the ecclesiastical organisation by enlightened secular rulers (*e. g.* Charles the Great) than voluntarily chosen by it, but later the Church fully accepted the responsibility, and was the chief —in Western Europe almost the only—instrument for the preservation, diffusion and advancement of knowledge.

Pictorial representations in churches gave some instruction on religious and secular matters to the unlearned, and stimulated the imagination and

[1] Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, i, 559.

[2] Cf. Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*; Leach, *Schools of Mediæval England*.

æsthetic sense in a way not provided in the schools. The birth, death, resurrection of our Lord, the lives of the Virgin and the Saints, the Last Judgment are favourite subjects. It is remarkable that the ministry and teaching of Christ are rarely depicted between the sixth and the sixteenth centuries; and the few parables which occasionally appear in stained-glass windows are generally allegorised.[1] Among secular subjects, shown especially in sculptured medallions, may be mentioned illustrations of natural history and the geography of the world.

At certain periods and in certain places monastic schools exercised a deep and wide influence;[2] and it would be difficult to over-estimate the debt which we owe to monastic libraries in general. The stricter and more professional monks, however, such as the Cistercians, discouraged educational activities as inconsistent with their higher calling, and Cistercian ideals reacted on other monastic orders. Some of the older Benedictine monasteries continued to support grammar schools, but these were outside the monastic precincts, and were generally taught by seculars. From the twelfth century onwards educational activities emanated from other sources. General Councils decreed that every Cathedral and every other great church should maintain a school where poor clerks should receive a free education. Complaints that these decrees were not carried out are frequent and general. Especially

[1] On this subject see E. Mâle, *Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 176–201.

[2] Cf. Miss R. Graham's *Intellectual Influence of English Monasticism*. Trans. R. Hist. Soc., New Ser. XVII, 1904.

the failure to provide theological instruction is insisted on: chapters rarely set aside any endowment for the maintenance of a theological lecturer. The want was partly supplied by the remarkable system of graded schools established by the friars; but owing to the antagonism between the friars and the secular clergy, it seems that the latter made little use of these schools after the thirteenth century. The standard of learning among the parish priests was very low. When, however, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the rediscovery of the philosophical works of Aristotle opened out new lines of thought, the Church was able to retain the intellectual leadership through the instrumentality of the mendicant orders of friars, who assimilated the new learning and harmonised it with Christian doctrine. St. Thomas Aquinas was regarded in his own day by friend and foe alike as an 'innovator.' It was a fact fruitful in results that the same communities which produced the foremost thinkers also produced the most popular preachers and teachers.

In each Cathedral church the chancellor (or secretary of the chapter) was usually master of the school, but he generally delegated his teaching work and granted to others licence to teach. Normally the chancellor's licence was necessary to enable a man to keep a school in the diocese, and theoretically the licence was granted without fee to any competent applicant.

In places where students congregated in large numbers and there were many licensed teachers, the teachers, or students, or the teachers and

students together, formed unions or universities [1] to protect their rights. Such bodies were jealous of outside ecclesiastical interference. The University of Paris was constantly at feud with the Chancellor of Notre Dame, to whom nominally belonged the right to grant licence to teach, *i. e.* to grant degrees. Oxford and Cambridge, not being in episcopal cities, had less trouble and were able to elect chancellors of their own and become self-governing. The Universities were able to maintain a very wide freedom of thought and discussion. Some theorists even claimed for the Universities an independent position, as the organ of learning and truth, side by side with the Church and the State, and saw in the *sacerdotium*, the *regnum* and the *studium* the three governing principles of the world. But the Universities were from time to time subject to the intervention of the Church authorities, and the Papacy made short work of the claim of the University of Paris to be the interpreter of Papal decrees.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries education tended to pass out of the exclusive control of the Church. The movement was not, except in rare cases, due to jealousy of, or hostility to, the Church, but to economic causes and to the growth of public spirit among the laity. Individuals, municipalities, gilds, now appear as founders and governors of schools, which are independent of any ecclesiastical

[1] The word 'universitas' in the Middle Ages was applied to any association or community, *e. g.* a gild, or city, as well as to an association of teachers and students or a University in the modern sense.

organisation and may be taught by clerks or laymen.

The Church had done its work. It had successfully carried education through its pioneer stage and linked it with the life of the times.

"The mediæval Church was the greatest teaching body in existence: its thought wound into men's minds by a hundred channels, and its influence must be judged by its indirect effect in modifying opinion, rather than by its direct intervention through legislation or judicial action. Mediæval thought would not allow that there was any department of life which lay outside the scope of Christian ethics, and which was to be guided by a purely naturalistic morality, such as that to-day expressed in the phrases 'the struggle for existence' or 'the survival of the fittest.'" [1]

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[1] *Archbishops' Report*, p. 36.

IV

THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

IV. THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD [1]

(a) *Links with the Mediæval Period.*—The social thought described in the account of the preceding period had drawn its substance from the facts of the mediæval and social organisation. Its conception of society as an organism composed of classes with varying rights and obligations had been a softened reflection of the feudal land system. Its theory of economic ethics, with its prohibition of usury and insistence on reasonable prices, had been designed to meet the economic problems of an age in which, outside the great industrial centres of Flanders and Northern Italy, the typical producer was not a wage-worker, but a peasant or small master whom a bad harvest or a commercial misfortune drove to the moneylender, and in which the consumer in the absence of legal protection was liable to be at the mercy of a system of legalised monopolies. Its insistence that economic interests were, not a closed compartment with laws of their own, but a subordinate fact of a larger whole of which the apex was religion, had been the natural corollary of the claim of the Church to be the final arbiter of human affairs. All activities fell within a single scheme, because all, though with different degrees of immediateness, were related to a single end.

[1] For Bibliographical Notes for this period see p. 117.

These conceptions, which constitute the social tradition of Christendom, as embodied in its legal system and its political philosophy, were the equipment with which the religious thought of the sixteenth century faced the new economic problems that crowded upon it. Men clung to them with the greater devotion because they seemed the one good road in a country where all landmarks were being submerged by the flood of ceaseless economic change, which from this time onwards becomes one of the master forces of history. In face of the long rise in prices, which set in early in the century and proceeded with redoubled rapidity in the forties, customary standards of payment broke down, and with them the customary social relationships of which they had been the economic foundation. Partly because of the screw which the depreciation of money turned on landlords; partly because of the expansion of the textile trade; partly, perhaps, because uneconomical methods of cultivation were yielding diminishing returns; partly through the collapse of feudalism as a system of political organisation, the traditional structure of rural life began to give way to a new commercialising of agriculture. The most conspicuous symptoms of this in England were the spread of pasture farming, enclosures and competitive rents and fines, and, in Germany, a relentless enforcement of onerous and antiquated services; and the result, in both alike, was a series of peasant revolts, swelling up into a social war. With the widening of the area of commerce which followed the great discoveries, international trade not only altered its course but

changed its character. The new scale on which commerce was conducted gave their opportunity to combines which commanded the resources to handle it in bulk, and to corner the markets in spices or in coffee. An international money market with speculation in futures and arbitrage dealings developed, and capital drawn from every corner of Europe was placed by Antwerp agents of German bankers at the disposal of merchants who needed funds to finance the movement of exports, and of Governments arming for the ceaseless wars of the age. One industry after another passed into a stage of semi-capitalism, in which, while the processes of manufacture were performed by the workman in his own home, he depended for raw materials, credit and markets, upon an *entrepreneur*. Finance became a power to which Governments must defer; and the mediæval *bourgeoisie*, intent on the conservation of local and corporate privileges, was increasingly merged in a new plutocracy, concerned to vindicate the power of the capitalist to dispense with the artificial protection of gild and borough and to carve his own career.

(b) *The Christian economics of the sixteenth century.*—The economic revolution gave rise to passionate controversy, and since social thought had been cast in the mould of religion, religious leaders were the protagonists in it. To the peasant farmer or small master, who was still the typical workman of the age, the crucial problems continued to be those which sprang from his relation to his landlord or to the moneylender to whom he pledged his crops or his wares in return for immediate

accommodation; and they were the more crucial in the sixteenth century because the changes in land tenure and the growing power of capital were confronting him with the alien environment of an increasingly commercial civilisation. Hence the literature produced on the subject of usury, prices and the land question, was voluminous. Luther, Melanchthon, Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger, Latimer, Sandys and Jewel—to mention no others—all took part in the discussion: they took part in it not as social reformers, but as religious teachers. For economic issues were regarded, as in the past, not as the expression of impersonal forces but as matters of individual conduct, involving personal responsibility; and where we see the movements of markets ebbing and flowing as irresistibly as the tides, they saw and lamented the failure to master economic appetites. Had they grasped the fact that particular acts of covetousness or oppression could be expressed in terms of a general law, they would no more have regarded that fact as absolving the individual of his moral responsibilities than the modern statistician, who correlates the consumption of alcohol or the illegitimate birth-rate with the changes in the price of wheat, considers himself precluded from condemning intemperance or sexual immorality. Avarice, they would have replied, does not become less reprehensible because the transactions in which it is embodied can be expressed in a series displaying certain characteristics of uniformity and symmetry. The individual is responsible for his action, and it is the duty of the religious teacher to emphasise his responsibility.

This assumption that religion embraced the whole of life, and not merely certain departments of it, was common to all schools of opinion; and if it is true that the Reformation gave an impetus to the growth of the modern dualism between religion and business, it did so without design and against the intention of most of the reformers. However profound the differences between Catholics and Anglicans, Lutherans and Calvinists, on questions of doctrine or Church government, Luther and Calvin, Latimer and Laud, John Knox and the Pilgrim Fathers agreed in holding that social morality was the province of the Church, and that the Church should both teach it and, when necessary, enforce it by suitable discipline. Nor, in the second place, except for the qualifications in the theory of money introduced by Calvin, was there any intention of relaxing the particular rules in which the attempt to enforce good conscience in bargains had found expression. Luther might denounce the Canon law in general and protest that the Bible was an all-sufficient rule of action. But when he spoke on economic matters, as in his long and famous sermon on usury, and his tract on *Trade and Usury*, the doctrines to which he appealed were those of the Canon law, stripped of the qualifications by which later Canonists had attempted to adjust it to the growing complexity of commercial enterprise, and his teaching as to prices and interest is more open to the charge of impracticable conservatism than of laxity. In England Latimer was the centre of a group of reformers—known to their opponents by the ironical

name of the "Commonwealth men"—who denounced the commercialising of agrarian relationships as an outrage on the corporate solidarity of a Christian society; helped to secure the appointment of the Commission of 1540 on Depopulation; and stood behind Somerset in his ill-fated attempt to undo the social changes of the last half-century by throwing down the gentry's enclosures. The men who enriched themselves by means of the great pillage, and who had built up large estates by plundering the Church, were not eager for the enforcement of any high standards of social morality in the name of reform.

Speaking generally, insistence that the property owner is a trustee whose rights are at once conditional on the function which he performs and limited by the rule of charitable dealing towards those dependent on him, was characteristic of the attitude towards the Land questions assumed by religious teachers from the Reformation to the Civil War; and Laud, who, as Clarendon said, "did a little too much countenance the Commission on Depopulation," was the last great example of it. It was a result of the same social conservatism that the leaders of the English Church accepted without question the traditional doctrine as to usury. In the extensive literature on the subject mediæval schoolmen, Councils and Papal decretals, were quoted freely as evidence that usury was against the law of the Church. To the critic who objected that the moral discipline of the Church had been abrogated by the new religious dispensation, Dr. Wilson, a Master of the Court of

Requests and for a short time Secretary of State, could reply that "the dissenting gospeller," who "for private gain undoeth the welfare of man," is as reprehensible as "the wilful and obdurate Papist," that men ought not "altogether to be enemies of the Canon laws . . . because the Pope was author of them," and that "there be some such laws made by the Pope as be right godly."

In spite of the increasing discredit of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, cases of usurious contracts still continued to be brought occasionally before the ecclesiastical courts. Archbishop Grindal's injunctions to the clergy and laity of the Province of York (1571) expressly emphasised the duty of 'presenting to the ordinary' those who lend and demand back more than the principal, whatever the guise under which the transaction might be concealed. Bishops' articles of visitation down to the Civil War required the presentation of uncharitable persons and usurers, together with swearers, drunkards, ribalds and sorcerers. The rules to be observed in excommunicating the impenitent promulgated in 1585, the Canons of the Province of Canterbury in 1604, and the Canons of the Irish Church in 1637, all included a provision that the usurer should be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline. What is significant is less the denunciation of the particular offence than the conception of a scheme of social morality based on religion which it implies. "If any man be so addicted to his private interest," preached Laud in 1621, "that he neglects the common State, he is void of the sense of piety and wishes peace and happiness for himself in vain.

For whoever he be, he must live in the body of the Commonwealth and in the body of the Church." To such a temper economic was as repugnant as religious individualism. The doctrine that religion oversteps its province when it interferes with economic affairs would have been as unintelligible to most sixteenth-century Churchmen as to their mediæval predecessors.

Nor was it only the right wing of the reformed Churches which continued the mediæval tradition. Calvinism, at least in the first half-century of its history, stood for the subordination of economic appetites to a discipline not less but more rigorous than that against which it revolted. Calvin, it is true, accepted as the starting-point of his social theory the realities of a commercial civilisation—capitalist commerce, banking and investments—which Luther, with his simpler scheme of patriarchal ethics, had denounced as belonging to the very essence of the kingdom of darkness, which the Churchman must shun. In the qualified sanction which he gave to interest, involving, as it did, a distinction between interest and usury, Calvin attempted to maintain the principle that the lender should not wring extortionate gain from the necessities of the borrower; while at the same time, he adapted it to the facts of a society in which the borrower was not seldom a wealthy merchant, who raised a loan in order to speculate on the foreign exchange and to make a profitable *coup* by dealing in wool or wheat. His innovation was of considerable speculative interest and of some practical importance. It founded a doctrine which, while

hotly disputed, was taught henceforward by a school of divines of increasing influence, such as Bullinger in the sixteenth century and Ames in the seventeenth, thus introducing a division into the moralists' camp. In England in particular (where, after a short interval of five years from 1545 to 1551, during which interest not exceeding 12 per cent. had been legalised, all interest had again been prohibited by the Act of Edward VI) it supplied wavering legislation with an excuse for saying that ecclesiastics did not know their own minds. But to read Calvin's remarks as implying a general indifference to matters of economic morality is completely to misinterpret the spirit of Calvinism. His famous or notorious 'indulgence' was after all merely one specimen of a long series of interpretations by which theologians had attempted ever since the thirteenth century to bridge the gulf between religious theory and commercial practice; and the conditions by which it was accompanied—that interest should never be demanded from the poor, that, when demanded, it should never exceed a rate fixed by public authority, that the borrowers should benefit as much as or more than the lender—were of a kind to be hardly more consoling to the devout moneylender than complete prohibition. How far Calvinism was from intending to encourage the sacrifice of moral to economic interests a glance at the teaching of Calvinist divines is sufficient to show. Ames in the first half of the seventeenth century, and Baxter in the second, both produced works of economic casuistry in which the traditional teaching as to prices and usury appeared almost

unaltered, except for the concession made to moderate interest; and the duties of lender and borrower, seller and buyer, landlord and tenant, were defined with the precision of a mediæval *summa*.

(c) *The passing of the Christian view.*—The assumption, then, that the conduct of man in his economic relations was to be controlled by rules derived from religion and expounded by the Church, had survived the shock of the Reformation. It still remained the common Christian conviction that transactions of business were just one department of ethical conduct and to be judged, like other parts of it, by ethical criteria; that whatever concessions the State might see fit to make to human frailty, a certain standard of economic morality was involved in membership of the Christian Church; and that it was the function of ecclesiastical authorities, whoever they might be, to take the action needed to bring home to men their social obligations. Such doctrines, far from being the monopoly of any particular school of religious thought, were a legacy shared by Protestants as fully as by Catholics. But they were a legacy which could survive as a living reality only by virtue of a perpetual effort to restate its implications in a form applicable to the special conditions and practical problems with which each generation was confronted. What meets us in the sixteenth, and still more in the seventeenth century, is the decline of the whole body of ideas of which the attempt to create a Christian casuistry of economic conduct had been the practical expression. Increasingly disputed by practical men and gradually

discarded by religious teachers, the conception that a moral rule is binding on Christians in their economic transactions gives way to the temper which asserts that no moral rule beyond the letter of the civil law exists. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the view that trade is one thing and religion another, if not explicitly asserted, is tacitly accepted.

The change of thought was momentous. Could any intellectual revolution be more profound than one which substituted for a supernatural criterion one conception or another of economic expediency? Its connection with the political struggles of the age requires no emphasis.

The Civil War weakened authority, political and ecclesiastical. It left England with a divided Church, and from the Restoration onwards no such power was entrusted to churchmen as had been exercised by Laud. The Star Chamber as a means of enforcing social standards was not re-established, and the laity saw to it that the clergy did not again hold high office in the State. The power of the Privy Council was no longer what it had been in the days of the first Stuarts. Episcopal courts confined themselves more and more to technical offences against ecclesiastical discipline.

But what was not less fundamental than the discrediting of ecclesiastical authority, was the failure of all schools of religious opinion to work out a social theory applicable to the condition of a society where economic development was entering on seas uncharted by the mediæval moralist. Systems prepare their own ruin by a preliminary process of petrifaction; and if the continuity of religious

teaching from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century is impressive, it is none the less evidence of the failure of thought to keep pace with the changing realities of economic organisation. Traditional doctrines of prices and usury had endeavoured to moralise economic transactions by treating them as a simple case of neighbourly or unneighbourly conduct; and they were repeated in a hundred pamphlets between 1600 and 1640. But in the conditions produced by the growth of international commerce, of capitalist industry and of an elaborate financial organisation, the question which remained for solution was, Who exactly is the neighbour in question? The teaching which had as its target the uncharitable covetousness of the village pawnbroker neither made nor could it be expected to make any impression on the clothier, the East India merchant or the goldsmith banker. To be influential it should have been recreated: in actual fact it was merely restated. Its ineffectiveness in practice prepared the way for its total abandonment as a theory. The social philosophy of the Church had ceased, in short, to be creative and had become traditional. As it became merely traditional it drifted further and further away from the realities of the business world. And as it lost touch with reality, it lost its hold first upon the conscience of practical men and then upon the clergy themselves. What after the Restoration took its place among the educated classes was the new science of Political Arithmetic, which treated economic phenomena, not as a casuist concerned to distinguish right from wrong, but as a scientist

interested in the objective analysis of non-moral forces.

(d) *The naturalistic social philosophy of the new period.*—Intellectually the way was prepared for this morally detached attitude of mind by the revival or reinterpretation of the old Stoic concept of Natural Law, which began with the Renaissance and culminated in the eighteenth century. In the work of Hugo Grotius, this idea of natural law is dissociated from the idea of God. In the ancient Church there had arisen a modified theory of the Stoic idea of natural law. It was an order imposed or sanctioned by God as a remedy for the consequences of the Fall. But in Grotius, natural law is self-subsisting, self-explanatory. "The purpose of the natural order is not the honour of God, but the welfare of man." From this starting-point Grotius developed a theory of a social contract in a conservative sense. Many different theories could be and were constructed on this basis, but the basis itself involves the belief in a natural law, a social order, which would be valid whether or no it were supported by religious faith. "The Puritans developed their sociological ideas directly out of their religion; they determined their attitude towards society and industry in the name of God: Grotius led the way to a complete severance of the two realms. Religion stands by itself, it has nothing to do with natural law; and natural law stands by itself, it has nothing to do with religion. The two realms of human life are entirely neutral in relation to one another. (This is of fundamental importance for the later attitude

of the Church.) For if natural law has nothing to do with religion, the Church has nothing to do with the social question." [1] As the influence of this idea of natural law spread, and even before it received its significant development in the classical political economy, the Christian ethic tended to become purely individualistic. The question whether Christianity had a doctrine of society or involved a social revolution was left on one side. The Church had surrendered the guidance of human conduct in business and politics to the economist and the politician.

Closely connected with the idea of natural law was the conception of *International Law*, especially in its bearing on war, which arose out of problems due to the Wars of Religion, particularly the Thirty Years' War. But here the Law of Nature and the Christian revelation were treated as largely agreeing with and supporting each other.

International law proper owes its origin to the *Jus Gentium* and *Jus Naturale* of Rome: its inspiration is to be found in Stoic philosophy rather than in Christian teaching. After the breakdown of the Roman system, however, it was Christian idealism which took over the Stoic idea of the law of Nature, together with the authority of the Church, that kept alive and revived the idea of international obligation. In the eleventh century the Church was partially successful in asserting the 'truce of God.' The Pope was often arbiter between rulers. The Canonists were amongst the mediæval forerunners of the international lawyers. Thomas Aquinas himself paid some attention to international law. The moral theologians at the end of the fifteenth century—and especially the Spaniard, Franciscus à Victoria—discussed international law more fully. War is justified by refer-

[1] J. Meyer, *Das soziale Naturrecht in der christlichen Kirche*, 33ff.

ence to the Old Testament in the works of several sixteenth-century writers, including Victoria and Ayala.

The modern science of international law comes to fruition in the works of Albericus Gentilis and Hugo Grotius. Both were, unlike Machiavelli and his non-moral politics, inspired largely by the desire to bring international practice into closer conformity with moral principle and to enlist the sympathy of Christian people for that aim; both enforced their arguments by frequent reference to the Bible, to the early Fathers, to St. Augustine and to the Canonists. The following quotations from Grotius may be regarded as fairly typical.[1]

First he gives as his reason for writing on this subject that he "saw prevailing throughout the Christian world a licence in making war of which even barbarous nations would have been ashamed." "The books written by men inspired by God, or approved by them, I often use as authority, with a distinction between the Old and the New Law." "I use the New Testament for this purpose, that I may show, what cannot be shown in any other way, what is lawful for Christians." He concludes his Introduction with the words: "And now, if I have said anything which is at variance with sound piety, with good morals, with Holy Scripture, with the unity of the Christian Church, with truth in any form—let that be as unsaid." "If, therefore, a peace sufficiently safe can be had, it is not ill secured by the condonation of offences, and damages, and expenses; especially among Christians, to whom the Lord has given His peace as His

[1] Grotius quotes the Old Testament 51 times; the New 64 times; the Fathers and other theologians 23 times; these three together forming about half his references to classic authorities. The first four of the quotations given above are from the Introduction to his *De jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625), and the last two from the closing pages.

legacy." Finally, "May God write these lessons—He who alone can—on the hearts of all those who have the affairs of Christendom in their hands; and may He give to those persons a mind fitted to understand and to respect Rights, divine and human; and lead them to recollect always that the ministration committed to them is no less than this, that they are the governors of Man, a creature most dear to God!"

(e) *The social influences of Puritanism.*—The Puritanism, too, which was the faith of large sections of the *bourgeoisie*, and which had its strongholds in the commercial centres, exhibited, when its heroic age was over, a temper of social indifferentism. "Prudence and Piety," wrote a Puritan divine,[1] "were ever very good friends. You may gain enough of both worlds if you would mind each in its place." The qualities which such a creed emphasised were those of foresight, industry, thrift and material calculation, intensity and earnestness of labour. In throwing these into high relief, it naturally, if not quite logically, tended to disparage the moral significance of the social environment for which the individual, as an individual, is not directly responsible. A zealous discharge of private duties was at once, it was suggested, the high-road to business success and the loftiest form of moral virtue. Of the collectivist and individualist elements which lay side by side in the teaching of Calvin and his sixteenth-century popularisers, it was the individualist element which survived.

This tendency to individualism survived in part because the Puritans, as Nonconformists, were, in the eighteenth century, shut out from the

[1] Steele, *The Religious Tradesman.*

Universities and to a large extent excluded from political influence. They were also merged in sects which had indeed in the seventeenth century been socially more revolutionary than the Calvinists, but which had had to moderate their enthusiasms, partly in the sheer struggle to survive at all in the face of persecution, and partly in the effort to become respectable. For it must be remembered that the seventeenth-century sects had two characteristics in common. They were intensely democratic in spirit and they stood for some kind of social revolution. This last point is true not only of the most extravagant sects—like the Levellers, the Diggers and the Fifth Monarchy men—which were suppressed, but also of the Quakers, the Baptists and Independents, which survived. George Fox, *e. g.*, saw in vision fair a time when we should have a Christian world without lawyers, without soldiers, without doctors and without clergy. This vision is certainly revolutionary. But after the Restoration the energies of Quakerism were largely taken up with the urgent task of self-preservation, and with paying the purchase-price of toleration. The situation of other Dissenters was not dissimilar. In the eighteenth century the whole force of the Puritan and allied traditions seems to be devoted to the maintenance of certain standards of individual conduct and the preservation of certain religious groups and communities. The sense of wider Christian responsibilities was largely lost, until John Woolman initiated the anti-slavery movement by his loyalty to conscience, and until William Carey, stirred by the new Evangelical

movement, burst the bonds of the old Calvinist orthodoxy and started the modern missionary movement.

Politically Puritanism and the influence of the sects [1] developed democracy. In the seventeenth century the Puritans at least ensured the constitutional character of our monarchy. In the eighteenth century the little independent churches proved themselves to be the training-ground of modern democracy. But just as they had to struggle for individual liberty in religion and in politics, so they came to distrust all State interference, all social control in industry, and tended to make the individual a law unto himself in his business dealings. The result was that when the sweeping movement of economic reconstruction, to which convention assigns the not very felicitous name of the Industrial Revolution, took place in the eighteenth century, the consciences of the mass of middle-class men were often already disarmed by the very nature of the religion which they professed.

[1] See E. Borgeaud, *The Rise of Democracy*.

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V

THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

V. THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES[1]

This period may conveniently be taken to cover a century and a half, and may be divided, despite inevitable overlappings, into three sections of half a century each. The first will cover the years from 1770 to 1820; the second, the years from 1820 to 1870; the third, the years from 1870 to 1920. During the first will be seen the rise of a new social order, during the second the reign of Individualism, and during the third the reaction from Individualism.

(A) The Rise of the New Social Order (1770 to 1820 A.D.)

1. Historical Survey.—The eighteenth century saw the landed aristocracy in almost complete possession of power, as the result of the part it played in the constitutional revolution of 1688. It dominated both the State and the Established Church, and sternly disciplined Nonconformity. Parliament became entirely controlled by the landed interest. But in the last quarter of that century a new force rapidly rose to power with it—that of the capitalist manufacturers. These two interests in uneasy

[1] For Bibliographical Notes on this period see p. 158.

partnership entirely ruled the country for a long half-century. Together they revolutionised the whole order of English society, and that with a suddenness which was startling. The process may be seen in the operation of three chief causes, in three contemporary events which acted and interacted—the French wars, the Agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

(a) *The French wars: social effects.*—The French wars extended from 1793 to 1815. Victory in these gave command of the seas, supremacy in commerce, and the beginnings of Empire in the East. They enriched landowners and farmers, merchants and manufacturers, but exhausted the State and crushed the main body of the English people. The National Debt, which stood at £247¾ millions in 1790, rose by 1815 to £861 millions. Taxes were placed upon every necessary and convenience of daily life. To add to the misery, prices rose, wages fell. But profits soared and rent-rolls increased. By 1815 both raw cotton imports and all exports had doubled. Never before had wealth accumulated in the hands of the few at such a rate.

(b) *The Agrarian Revolution: its effects and reactions.*—Simultaneously with the French wars a great agrarian revolution had been in process, which was another chief cause of the new wealth and new poverty. In 1760 the soil was farmed in common in more than half the parishes of England by village communities. The system was economically wasteful, and unable to provide for a population growing rapidly and threatened in its food supplies by the French blockade. Legislative steps were taken to

enclose the common fields, and commons and wastes. Enterprising landowners, adopting agricultural reforms, brought in the 'New Agriculture.' Stock, cultivation of the soil, and production of food were vastly improved. But it meant also large additions to private property in land. From 1760 to 1844 nearly 4000 Enclosure Acts were passed, covering about one-third of the cultivable area of England. All experts agree that these agricultural reforms and enclosures were carried out to the detriment of the labouring population. Arthur Young, the chief agent in stimulating them, declared that "the poor were injured by nineteen out of twenty Enclosure Acts." By these changes labourers were all reduced to entire dependence on money-wages. In the Agrarian Revolution (as real though not as political a revolution as the French) the English agriculturalist lost what the French peasant never did—his status—his right in the soil.

In 1688 three-fifths of the agricultural population held rights in land, and one-fifth were yeomen farmers. Yet up to a generation ago one-third of the entire area of England and Wales was in the hands of the landed aristocracy, a congestion in a few hands which had not happened since the Middle Ages, when the Church held one-third of the cultivable area. Barely one in a hundred and seventy came to own more than an acre of English ground[1]—a fact pregnant with important economic and social consequences.

The result of these agrarian 'reforms' was that during the first quarter of the nineteenth century agricultural labour pined and perished from reduced status, low wages and crushing taxation. In the words of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, "no class in the

[1] See *Evolution of Industry*, D. H. Macgregor, p. 155.

world has so beaten and crouching a history." Pauperism increased with appalling rapidity and so did poor-rates. Population too increased with such rapidity that Thorold Rogers affirms that nothing like such increase had been known in England for the five hundred years from 1300 to 1800. The decision of the Berkshire magistrates at Speenhamland near Newbury in 1795, to supplement farmers' wages from the poor-rates, to bring them up to subsistence level, with grants to new-born children, is generally regarded in this relation as having disastrous consequences upon the despairing labourers' *morale*.

The phenomenal rise in the poor-rates led to the enactment of the New Poor Law of 1834, which abolished outdoor relief and substituted the workhouse test. Hateful as this law was to the people, it brought down the poor-rates, yet it did not abate the misery. That misery led to grave discontent, to the emigration of the better types of labourers, and to much migration to the towns despite the Acts of Settlement. The drift to the towns led to a rapid redistribution of the population and changed the face of England.

(c) *The Industrial Revolution.*—Side by side with the French wars and the Agrarian Revolution went on another revolution—the industrial, that made by the new machine-industry. The invention of spinning and weaving machinery by Arkwright, Crompton, Hargreaves, Cartwright and others destroyed domestic industry. The new machines, driven first by water and then later, through James Watt's invention, by steam, displaced hand-loom

machinery. They inaugurated the Factory System and capitalistic manufacture. Hitherto the craftsman had dwelt in his own cottage, with its garden, near the fields. He had worked his own machines, often owned his own tools, and marketed his own product. He lived in frugal comfort and independence. Now all became changed. He was driven into the factory towns for a living, with nothing but his labour for hire, and that in a market cheapened by the influx of the destitute agricultural labourers, and by the labour of women and children.

The new machinery multiplied the powers of production a hundredfold. It was expensive and ran in large factories owned by capitalists. These 'cotton lords' grew enormously wealthy, for trade increased by leaps and bounds. Thorold Rogers declares that "never in English history was wealth more rapidly accumulated by manufacturers and landlords than in the forty years between 1782 and 1821."[1] Wage-earners, however, gained no share in it. The condition of factory labour soon became a crying scandal. Mills ran day and night, served mainly by relays of women and little children, the latter working for fourteen, sixteen and more hours per day. Pauper children were exported by the 'Guardians' of the poor from the south to the north of England, and were treated in the mills with incredible cruelty. Sanitary conditions were appalling; the death-rate terrible. Feeble efforts were made to diminish some of the evils of the system, but it remained unchecked till 1830. The result of this traffic in flesh and blood for gain could be seen

[1] *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 220.

for a generation or two afterwards in the deteriorated physique of the populations of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Amongst the displaced handicraftsmen unemployment and low wages led to grave discontent.[1] Sedition, Conspiracy, and Anti-Combination Laws to prevent the workers uniting to better their condition were severely put into operation, and transportations and executions were frequent. It was not until the Repeal of the Anti-Combination Laws in 1824, through the skilful labours of Francis Place and Joseph Hume, that violence ceased. Even then the class-administration of the Conspiracy and other Acts made workmen's combinations difficult and even dangerous.[2] Mr. Sidney Webb states that the first twenty years of the nineteenth century witnessed a legal persecution of trade-unionists as rebels and revolutionaries.[3]

A marked feature of the Industrial Revolution was the growth of cities, towns and urban districts, especially in the north. These increased as if by magic, formless, haphazard, hideous, insanitary. Overcrowding, slums, disease, immorality, drunkenness and brutality inevitably ensued. Factory chimneys in hundreds spread a perpetual canopy of smoke. The skies were obscured, sunshine enfeebled, the atmosphere vitiated. Vegetation withered, rivers were poisoned, beauty vanished. The minds of men became materialised as their work became mechanised and their environment defiled. Workers lost their

[1] Between 1811 and 1816 Luddite and other riots occurred, in which new machinery was destroyed and life lost.

[2] The fate of the "Tolpuddle martyrs" is a case in point.

[3] *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 63.

interest in production both from the monotony of the subdivision of labour, with the long hours, and from their lack of any other share in it than a low wage. Class antagonism deepened as the only relation between master and man became that of a cash-nexus and men were regarded as mere 'hands.'

The new machine-industry won undeniable victories in the field of production, in the provision of employment for multitudes, and in the creation of wealth for the comparatively few. It evoked great inventions and fine qualities of organisation and business management. It wrought also better than it knew or intended, in disciplining men in multitudes to regular and peaceful combined action. Upon the material plane a wonderful, complex civilisation arose, with an ever-increasing standard of comfort and luxury. New arts developed, applied science began its majestic career, and the ends of the earth were drawn together. Nevertheless material developments wholly outdistanced moral. The new system failed to secure justice to the economically weak—the worst indictment which can be brought against a professedly Christian civilisation. It began its career with grave injustices, injustices which for fifty years it barely made an effort to undo. Perhaps responsible business men's eyes were too intently fixed upon the dazzling economic transformations which were in process, for them to cast a glance at the conditions and treatment of the indispensable workers.

2. The Church in Relation to the Rise of the New Social Order.—The Christian Church itself, generally speaking, seemed unable to realise the grave

moral and spiritual issues at stake and unaware of the inhumanity of the new economic developments. It is strange that it should have been so blind to the steady subordination of men to machinery, and the subordination of things spiritual and æsthetic as well as ethical to the cause of material gain. So general was its blindness that even the exceptions to this are frequently forgotten or ignored. It may be useful to indicate some of them.

(a) *The French wars* had their Christian opponents as well as their Christian supporters.

Dr. Richard Price, of the Old Jewry Meeting House, the Revs. Winterbotham and Mark Wilks, Baptists, and, at first, the famous Dissenting orator, Robert Hall, opposed them. Dr. Price evoked Burke's famous *Reflections* and his rash statement that "the Dissenters were disaffected citizens." This, however, covered many Churchmen, who also sympathised with the aims of the French Revolution. Opposition to the wars was not wholly left to William Cobbett, Tom Paine, William Godwin and Thos. Hardy—products of Dissent as the three latter were.

(b) As to the *Agrarian Revolution*, it is a melancholy fact that the Church in agricultural districts was too much controlled by landowners and farmers, or too much in sympathy with them, to give effective assistance to the oppressed and impoverished population save by charity and exhortation. Yet many notable things were done by individual Christian men and women to check or counteract the evils of the time.

Such men as Homer, rector of Birdingbury in 1790, and Demainbray, rector of Broad Somerford in 1806, tried to humanise or make less unjust the enclosures in their parishes. Dr. Davies, rector of Barkham, an earnest social reformer, advocated in 1795

work for the unemployed, unemployment insurance, rate-allowances for children, and some land for every cottager. Howlett, vicar of Dunmow, in 1795 publicly opposed Pitt's ruinous policy of lavish outdoor relief and supported Samuel Whitbread's Bill for the enactment of a minimum living wage. George Crabbe the poet, another clergyman, described between 1783 and 1812 with stern fidelity the wretched condition of the rural poor. Sidney Smith spoke out also in the early century. Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, more practically opened in Mongewell in 1794 the first Co-operative Distributive Society to serve three parishes in Oxon. The Rev. J. Smith founded the first Savings Bank at Wendover, and Priscilla Wakefield, cousin of Elizabeth Fry, opened in 1798 a 'Frugality Bank,' whilst the Rev. Henry Duncan established the first self-sustaining People's Bank in 1810 at Rothwell, a model which eventually led to the establishment of the Post Office Savings Bank. In 1773 the Rev. James Cowe, vicar of Sunbury, formed the first philanthropic Friendly Society. The Friendly Society movement received from the first great assistance from Churchmen and Dissenters. The Becher Society of Stewponey still preserves the name of Prebendary Becher of Southwell. When Friendly Societies began to develop into 'Orders'—like the Oddfellows—they were at first suppressed under the Sedition Act which forbade any meeting of working men of more than fifty in number.

These philanthropic movements were mainly ameliorative. They did not touch the main economic situation, nor were they numerous or widespread enough greatly to affect the distress. But they saved individuals and did a little also to save the Christian name.

The Evangelical Revival under the Wesleys and Whitefield began in a period of economic prosperity for the labouring people. Thorold Rogers holds that it could only have begun in such a period. It is generally agreed that its spiritual influence sustained masses of the English people during the subsequent distress, and furthermore exerted a moral

influence which saved English society from the revolutionary spirit which wrought such havoc in contemporary France. John Wesley himself had been a social reformer in his prison work, in his employment schemes for the out-of-work, his loan society, his 'stranger's friend' society, his orphan house, his school at Kingswood, and his provision and circulation of cheap and good literature.

The Evangelical movement certainly quickened compassion and gave rise to important philanthropic and educational movements. It led to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 under Granville Sharp, Clarkson and Wilberforce. Foreign Missionary Societies, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge—all were formed just before or after the year 1800. Sunday schools arose through Hannah Ball of High Wycombe and Robert Raikes of Gloucester. By 1801 there were 1500 such schools in which 156,500 children were taught. Ragged schools were started by John Pound of Portsmouth. Joseph Lancaster and Dr. Bell, the one a Quaker and the other a Churchman, became the famous pioneers of elementary education. Silas Told, John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, by 1815, through their devoted labour secured humaner methods and improved food and hygiene in the prisons—a not unimportant matter in years when dread of 'liberty' or fear of licence made imprisonment frequent for honest men and good citizens.

(c) The *Industrial Revolution* at its rise seems to have overwhelmed the forces of the Christian Church. Little was done officially to stem the tide of

evil or even to protest against it. Economic and business matters were regarded as beyond its range. The Bible too was taken as inculcating resignation in this world, with the expectation of justice and recompense in the world to come, and Christianity taken not as a standard by which to judge institutions, but as a Divine warrant for submission to them. Wilberforce, in his *Practical View*, told the lower orders "that their more lowly path had been allotted to them by the hand of God," that it was their part "faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly to bear its inconveniences." Wilberforce had more compassion for negroes than for his fellow-countrymen in their worse than slavery. He would do nothing to secure them either justice or freedom. Workers were a social necessity. Authority must be maintained. It is true that he helped the Spitalfields weavers to a Minimum Wage Act. But it was at the request of the employers, in order to save their industry from extinction. Paley actually argued that the poor were better off than the rich—"frugality is itself a pleasure"! It has been truly observed that "On the fifty years that laid the foundations of modern England, the influence of the Church as a witness to social righteousness was, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, almost negligible." [1]

Yet the spirit of Christianity was at work. It was at work in the great Welshman, Robert Owen, however much he might disown it. He was the first to realise the wickedness of the new factory system in its relation to working people. At the New Lanark Mills from 1800 to 1813, in association with

[1] *Archbishops' Report*, p. 47.

his partners, Jeremy Bentham the Utilitarian, and William Allen the Quaker, he embarked upon his epoch-making factory reforms. Improved conditions, shorter hours, sanitary decency, better dwellings, co-operative societies and infant schools were among the reforms of this noble pioneer. He demonstrated the compatibility of justice to the worker with success in business, to a world unwilling to learn. He made a fortune of £300,000, all of which he expended, like Ruskin later, in idealistic social experiments, concerning which the last word has not yet been spoken.

In the early struggle for Trade Unionism, before and immediately after the repeal in 1824 of the Anti-Combination Acts of 1795 and 1800, some Christian people were found friendly. There were the Midland Baptists: Robert Hall in 1819 formed a Framework Knitters Union for three midland counties, which lasted five years. Professor Granger says that "the Dissenting bodies of the Midlands helped to alleviate the mistakes and hardships which the Industrial Revolution involved. Among Unitarians, Priestley of Birmingham and Gilbert Wakefield of Nottingham may be mentioned. It is a great achievement of English Dissent that during this dreadful interval it supplied the newly-rising working class with spiritual strength and consolation." [1] The Church of England, through its clergy, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church, through its ministers, seem to have been hostile to early Trade Unionism. But there were exceptions in both Churches. Dorchester labourers were first organ-

[1] *Historical Sociology*, p. 224.

ised by two of the 'Tolpuddle martyrs,' George Loveless and his brother, who were Wesleyan local preachers. Mr. Sidney Webb has given recent testimony to the part played by Primitive Methodist local preachers in Christianising and civilising and then leading the miners of Northumberland and Durham in their new Unionism.[1]

(B) The Reign of Individualism (1820–1870 A.D.)

1. The Theoretical Bases.—For the next fifty years, from 1820 to 1870, Individualism reigned supreme. Wonders were wrought in the production of goods and of wealth. The system rapidly developed and consolidated. The number of self-made men multiplied. So did the number of men marred, and even many of the self-made were 'self-marred' in all that mattered most, 'made' only in the money sense. Yet men must find some intellectual justification to themselves and others for their way of life. Hence the new order was not long in developing educated defenders in two realms—in the economic and in the biological.

(a) *Economic theory*.—The new political economy, which expounded this system and drew out its 'laws,' was first formulated by Adam Smith in 1776. It was the culmination, in economics, of a European movement for freedom in all relations. In opposition to the Mercantile System complete *laissez-faire* was set forth as the ideal. The individual was to be entirely free from restraints and restrictions at home

[1] *The Story of the Durham Miner*, pp. 21–24.

and abroad. Adam Smith denounced Corn Laws and other protective duties, Combination Laws against workmen, and Settlement Acts restricting the freedom of labour; he proposed to tax ground rents, declared against Trusts, and in favour of high wages. But these views of his were ignored. "The governing classes adopted, in short, those parts of the economist's teaching which appeared advantageous to themselves and ignored the remainder." David Ricardo's economics followed, and "completed the final stage in making social evils tolerable to the consciences even of the best men," right up to 1870.[1] Ricardo was a financier and dealt in abstractions and deductions. He formulated his law of rent, his law of value and his iron law of wages. To Ricardo must be added John Stuart Mill, who published his *Principles of Political Economy* in 1848. From his time orthodox political economy ruled the business world, or rather the working classes, with a rod of iron. The 'laws' of supply and demand, the wages-fund, and others, were held up as having the value and inevitability of the law of gravitation. It has been truly stated "that the influence of this theory, during the period from 1820 to 1870, was incalculably great in staying social progress, in lulling the conscience of the educated classes, and therefore in encouraging a violent class antagonism."[2] For instance, take the following sentence in Archbishop Whateley's *Political Economy* (1831): "It is curious to observe how, through a wise and beneficent arrangement of Providence, men thus do the greatest

[1] *Archbishops' Report*, pp. 41 and 46.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

service to the public *when they are thinking of nothing but their own gain.*" Yet at its very initiation this political economy was challenged both in the name of humanity, by Thomas Hodgkin, and of Christianity also by men like Dr. Charles Hall, William Thompson and John Francis Bray. These names, through the glamour of Mill's writings, were unworthily forgotten. But when Marx and Lassalle began to turn the Ricardian laws, especially that of the labour theory of value, to the service of socialistic economic theory, a general change began. John Ruskin in 1861, in *Unto this Last*, exposed fallacies in John Stuart Mills' *Political Economy*, and memorably challenged the whole 'science.' In 1869 Mill renounced the wages-fund theory. Certain German and Austrian economists [1] demonstrated that the 'science' had been based upon passing phenomena in English business-life, that it was unhistorical in spirit, untrue to the law of development, ignored induction and the value of experiment, and, above all, divorced political economy from ethics. Christian thinkers and others joined in denying that self-interest, even 'enlightened self-interest,' could be the true law of economics, and held 'buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest' to be wrong when practised upon the life and labour of human beings. It began to be realised that the utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, which was closely connected with this new economy, needed, at its very best and highest, the most careful qualification and exposition, to be made consistent with Christianity. The fact came

[1] Schmoller, Roscher, Wagner, Schäffle, etc.

slowly to be recognised in thoughtful circles that political economy is, after all, but one branch of sociology, and can never be safely formulated apart from ethics, and Christian ethics in particular. Yet, as Mr. George Dibblee has said, " the old school of political economy stands unreplaced. Its original language is still current, and men between forty and fifty who guide the actual life of business know no other." He surmises that " it may still be dominant as a cheap philosophy in business for another hundred years." [1]

(b) *Biological theory*.—Biological theory also was enlisted in intellectual justification of the reigning system of industry and business. Evolution and natural selection were pressed into the service of Individualism and the competitive system. Herbert Spencer was perhaps the first. He began writing in the *Nonconformist* as early as 1842. From 1852 onwards he applied the doctrine of evolution to every department of human life in a series of monumental works. He tempered the utilitarian theory with the doctrine of development. Dr. Thomas Malthus's famous book on *Population* (1796), which maintained that social misery was due to the fact that population tends to increase in greater ratio than the means of subsistence, suggested to both Darwin and Wallace ideas which issued in their simultaneous formulation of the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Darwin's *Origin of Species*, based upon prolonged observation and experiment, was published in 1859 and created a new era in science and in human

[1] See *The Laws of Supply and Demand*, p. xi.

thought. Soon development by 'the struggle for existence' and 'the survival of the fittest' filled the mid-Victorian mind. Not only was this set forth as the law of *physical* nature, but it was stoutly declared to be the law of human society. The educated and employing classes discovered a scientific sanction for the competitive struggle in which they were 'the fittest' to survive. If 'the weakest went to the wall' it was a natural process, *pace* the New Testament. If many went under it was but by the operation of one or other of Malthus's 'natural checks.' The inhumanity of it all was hidden to them by its supposed inevitability. Intelligent workers naturally resented this and rebelled against these ideas. Professor Russell Wallace from the outset refused to consent, on the grounds of science, to an explanation of the origin of human nature and of human society in the terms of struggle and competition. Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*, also drastically criticised it. The Christian Church, be it said, was no more hasty in applying the new doctrine of evolution to economics than it was in applying it to theology. Its Christian instincts revolted against it, and from the first found expression in many Christian pulpits and publications.

2. Ameliorative Influences and Early Criticisms.—Nothing human is wholly bad. The human spirit is dauntless under the worst conditions. The working of the competitive system often fell into good hands and was made less intolerable. There were model employers like John Fielden and others, all through the period. Even during the triumph of Individualism criticism was not lacking,

and many ameliorations took place. There was, for instance—

(a) *Factory regulations and sanitary reform.*—The factory system continued to develop rapidly both intensively and extensively. Inventions multiplied, technical skill increased, organisation and production improved and markets developed. At no time, however, from the days of Robert Owen, were its evils unassailed. If the organised Church did not rise against them, Christian men did in numbers. The Factory Agitation may be said to have been a definitely Christian agitation. So early as 1802 Parliament was induced to pass protective legislation for children. Again in 1819 a nominal twelve-hours day was secured for them. In 1831 night-work in the cotton trade was forbidden to young persons. In 1833 a more drastic Act was passed, and then in 1847 the famous "Ten Hours Bill" was passed.

Individualism reigned in these years, and it is probable that the economists and manufacturers who were against such legislation, such interference with the 'liberty' of labour, of contract, and the freedom of commerce, would have succeeded in defeating it, had not the landed interest been at the time adverse to the manufacturing interest. Even men like John Bright and Richard Cobden in the name of 'freedom' opposed the factory legislation. The honour of the Ten Hours Factory Act rests with Christian men like Lord Shaftesbury, Richard Oastler, Michael Sadler, John Fielden the Oldham manufacturer, and the Revs. G. S. Bull and J. Rayner Stephens. Their difficulties were historic. The struggle was bitter and intense. The workers were in favour, but they

were unenfranchised and could only demonstrate. Robert Southey was frequently consulted by Shaftesbury on the steps to be taken in Parliament, on what Southey called "this most hellish of all slaveries—the slave trade was mercy to it."[1] William Wordsworth denounced the system in *The Excursion*.[2] But the organised Church held aloof. Lord Shaftesbury said that few ministers of religion stood by him, "they were cowed by the overwhelming influence of the cotton lords." Whilst this factory legislation was expressly limited to women and children, it could not fail to relieve the situation for adult male labour, partly displaced by, and partly dependent upon the labour of women and children. This was but the beginning of factory reform. Perhaps the most pregnant reform of all was the appointment of Factory Inspectors. The first Factory Inspectors' Report appeared in 1835.

Sanitary Reform is akin to Factory Reform, though wider, inasmuch as it had to deal with slum evils, disease, epidemics, drainage and the general health condition of the towns and the cities. It had been urged in relation to factories and factory dwellings in 1819 by Robert Owen. But four great Christian men gave it wider range, viz. Dr. Southwood Smith (1788–1861), the grandfather of Octavia Hill, Sir Edwin Chadwick (1800–90), Canon Girdlestone and Charles Kingsley. Their labours resulted in the Public Health Act of 1848, and later in the Board of Health of 1854. The physical well-being of the people gained much from these.

[1] Letters to Caroline Bowes (1822) and John May (1830).

[2] Books VIII and IX.

(b) *Development of education and the cheaper press.*—The movement for elementary education continued. It began as a voluntary Christian movement, induced by the felt deficiencies of Sunday School efforts at education. It was maintained in its two wings, Church and Dissent, by voluntary Christian effort, until the country came to realise their inadequacy and so sought through Lord Althorp, in 1832, to support them with grants in aid of buildings, and again in 1846 for general education. The movement culminated in the famous Education Act of 1870 under Mr. Forster, when elementary education became primarily a State system. Adult education received direct impetus from Mechanics' Institutes. William Lovett, the Chartist, was prominent in this; also Dr. Black, Edwin Chadwick and Dr. Birkbeck. The Rev. R. E. Bayley had founded a People's College at Sheffield. It served as a model for F. D. Maurice's Working Men's College in Great Ormonde Street in 1854, in which Ruskin, Furnivall and Rossetti taught. These were also the progenitors of the Adult School Movement (founded by Joseph Sturge in 1845), the Workers' Educational Association, Ruskin College, Oxford, and the Central Labour College. The Press also became an important element in the adult education of the time. The freedom of the press had been championed in the early century by Robert Hall. A cheap press, *i. e.* an unstamped press, was secured finally by the labour and ability of Cobbett with his *Political Register*, by Cleeve, Hetherington, and the Rev. James Smith of the *Shepherd*, *The Family Herald*, and other people's papers. William and Mary

Howitt and Charles Knight also did pioneer press work.

(c) *The struggle for Trade Unionism and the franchise.*—The struggle for Trade Unionism was a century long. From 1824 the workers breathed a little more freely, but their efforts to protect their modest standard of living by combination were often driven underground, with the usual result of violent and criminal procedure. Robert Owen's effort to create one great National Consolidated Union came to grief. The constitutional and constructive efforts for Trade Unionism between 1846–55 were greatly assisted by the Positivists, E. S. Beesly, Frederick Harrison and Henry Crompton. Finally, after the Royal Commission on the Sheffield outrages, the movement gained full Parliamentary and legal recognition, by the Acts of 1871 and 1875. It was helped by Christian men like Alexander Macdonald, Henry Broadhurst, Thomas Burt, Joseph Arch, and George Howells from within, and from without by G. and H. Lushington, Thomas Hughes and J. M. Ludlow, who rendered the movement in this period great Parliamentary, organising and legal assistance. By the end of this period Trade Unionism was successful in maintaining a decent standard of life for skilled labour. The attitude of the Christian Churches gradually grew more cordial.

The reaction due to the French Revolution blighted the work of Major Cartwright's 1780 Committee for Political Reform: but the movement was renewed after Waterloo with Cartwright as its Nestor, and Cobbett, William Lovett, Hetherington,

Hunt and Samuel Bamford as its active spirits. This movement too came to grief in 1819 at Peterloo, and was followed the same year by the iniquitous Six Acts. Yet repression could not last, and the agitation was renewed a decade later with vigour. Then came the 1832 Reform Bill. But the working classes were practically excluded from its benefits. Disappointed at this, and incensed by the New Poor Law of 1834 and the Press Regulations of 1836, the workers renewed political agitation. The Owenites, who first expounded Socialism, became active throughout the thirties. They were at first anti-Christian, until driven from this attitude largely by the Rev. James ('Shepherd') Smith. Spencerian Societies for the nationalisation of the land extended into this period. But *Chartism* (1837–42) became the dominating political movement and continued the agitation for the Cartwright political reforms. It had two divisions, one for recourse to physical force and the other using only 'moral force.' The latter was supported by many representative Christians. Joseph Sturge and Edward Miall, of the Complete Suffrage Movement, conferred with them. Charles Kingsley proclaimed himself a Chartist. William Lovett and Thomas Cooper, two very able men, Wesleyan Methodists, were chief promoters of it. Carlyle was in sympathy with it, as were also noble-minded men like George J. Holyoake, William Wade and John Collins. The movement, however, memorably and suddenly collapsed in 1842; yet had finally full fruition.

(d) *The Christian Socialists and Corn Law movements.*—The Rev. F. D. Maurice of King's College

had already been moved by the teaching of Coleridge and the writings of Carlyle in the direction of social reform, when John M. Ludlow, a barrister, was introduced to him. Ludlow was expert in economics and the new French socialism. He convinced Maurice of the need for a Christian interpretation of industrial and economic relations. Together they began the movement known as Christian Socialism (1848–54). Joined immediately by Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, and later by Vansittart Neale of co-operative fame, and other educated Christian men, the movement did work of permanent value, both critical and constructive. The latter took the form of working men's associations for co-operative production and distribution. But they were in advance of their time both in relation to working men and in relation to the contemporary Christian Church. They were misunderstood, and maligned. The movement died out after 1854 and attention turned to housing, sweating and sanitation. Then John Ruskin became a potent Christian force for social reconstruction. Nor can the name of Charles Dickens be omitted. William Ewart Gladstone is also important as the first of the nineteenth-century politicians to relate his political ideals explicitly to his Christian principles.

The Repeal of the Corn Laws, in which he with Bright, Cobden and Villiers were leaders, whilst resisted by landowners and suspected by Chartists, allayed discontent by making possible cheap food and so ending 'the hungry forties.' Seven hundred Christian ministers gathered in Manchester to further that movement. Then came the Reform Bill of

1867, which at last gave the artisan the franchise and began the new era.

(C) The Reaction from Individualism (1870–1920 A.D.)

1. The General Reaction.—Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill were great men, and England owed much to them in the matter of social progress. But the one-sided development and application of their *laissez-faire* doctrine led at last to a general reaction. Principal Ernest Barker rightly says that "the difference between the generation before and the generation after 1880 is profound." [1] The Statute Book reveals, as Professor Dicey has shown in his *Law and Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century*, that legislation, especially during the latter half of that century, was definitely 'collectivist.' The State had again assumed a positive position and become much more than a mere protector and a policeman. Reaction against Individualism was widespread, and revealed itself in many realms and forms, chiefly intellectual and moral, economic and political.

(a) *Theoretical.*—Matthew Arnold was one of the earliest awakening forces in literature. Herbert Spencer's *Sociology* too constituted a moral indictment of much in modern life and emphasises the organic nature of society. T. H. Green's Oxford Lectures on "The Principles of Political Obligation" taught that the State must facilitate the free moral development of its citizens. Edward Caird

[1] *Political Thought from Spencer*, p. 23.

struck the new note of collective action, quoting Arnold on "seeing life steadily and seeing it whole," in order "to raise the state of man and raise it organically."[1] Ruskin was passionately urging in *Fors Clavigera* that the community should be organised on rational and Christian principles. Huxley in his *Evolution and Ethics* declined to follow the ultra-Darwinians and place man wholly within physical nature. To him it presented a vast gladiatorial show. "Cosmic nature is no school of virtue, but the headquarters of the enemy of ethical nature." Man must "combat the cosmic process." Patrick Geddes in 1889 and Prince Kropotkin in 1902 declared that struggle was not the law of progress in Nature herself, but rather sociality and mutual aid. Similarly, J. Arthur Thomson and P. Geddes stated[2] that "the self-interest which utilitarian economists found the all-sufficient spring of action, which naturalists too long and too uncritically adopted from these, turns out to be 'enlightened' by family interest, species interest, however subconscious. Survivals in nature are finally through love and sacrifice, sociability and co-operation." Nature, therefore, scientists came to see, really presents the spectacle of evolution not by struggle alone but by sociality as well, even when man himself is not regarded as a part of Nature.

(b) *Practical.*—Concurrently with the intellectual and moral reaction of literary men, philosophical thinkers and scientists, there was also a strong practical revolt against Individualism upon the part

[1] Address to Ethical Society, 1883.

[2] *Evolution*, p. 246.

of multitudes who felt the pinch of the system in their daily lives or observed its effects upon others. It was mainly a reaction of moral indignation against the tyranny of industry, its exploitation of human beings in the interests of production and profit, its lack of consideration for the physical and moral well-being of the workers, their reduction to so much abstract labour, 'the cramping of their lives,' the disrespect to personality, the greyness and monotony of their daily toil and the uninspiring and damaging nature of their environment. A thousand pamphlets and periodicals and some sections of the press rang with it; and the attitude of statesmen and politicians began to change. These ideas and sentiments found at last practical expression from quite opposite quarters.

(i) *The statistical factor.*—Valuable investigations into social and economic facts were pursued and published. These were given to the country by statisticians like Giffen, Bowley and Chiozza Money, and by expert social students like the Right Hon. Charles Booth, B. Seebohm Rowntree and Mann. They revealed startling facts, which increased the reaction against Individualism. Undoubtedly wealth had greatly increased under its ægis. The national income increased all through the nineteenth century. In 1867 it was the equivalent of £29 per head of the population. By 1901 it had risen to £40 per head. But the wealth, the result of the joint efforts of capital and labour, was unjustly distributed. It was pointed out that one-half roughly of the national income, according to the Inland Revenue Returns, was in the hands of one-eighth of the population

and the other half only spread over the remaining seven-eighths.[1] By 1917 the Blue Books revealed that one-ninth of the population owned nine-tenths of the accumulated wealth of the country. The Board of Trade Returns revealed that from the outset of the twentieth century real wages fell, but profits increased.[2] In a word, all the ameliorations and reforms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which were very numerous and humane, seemed to avail little to secure justice to the workers, against whom all the economic scales seemed to be weighted. Messrs. Booth and Rowntree, by independent expert investigation, showed that one-third of the population lived in permanent poverty, one million in receipt of Poor Relief, another million in chronic want, receiving but 18*s.* per family per week, another million more or less affected by unemployment, and another million by under-employment.[3] These startling facts led to a rapid crystallisation of opinion in favour of drastic changes in the economic structure of society.

(ii) *The Socialist Movement.*—Such revelations were grist to the mill of an able body of revolutionary and reformist Socialists. The early English Socialists (Owenites) had been unheeded at home. Marx and Engels carried their teachings abroad. They returned restated and developed in the eighties. In 1881 H. M. Hyndman and William Morris

[1] See *Riches and Poverty*, Chiozza Money, 1908.

[2] Prices advanced 13·7, wages 2 to 5·5, incomes 22·5 per cent. See Board of Trade Returns for 1913.

[3] See the Labour Report of 1894 and the Poor Law Report of 1909.

founded the Social Democratic Federation, which, though influential, never became very numerous. In 1883 Thomas Davidson's personal influence led to the formation of the New Fellowship, which emphasised the moral factor in social reconstruction, and of the Fabian Society, which emphasised the economic and political factors, and had a longer life. In 1889 appeared the *Fabian Essays*, contributed by Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, Sidney Olivier and others, harbingers of a new era of administrative Socialism, characteristically English. On the working-class side appeared Keir Hardie, an avowed Christian, who founded the Independent Labour Party in 1893. This eventually led to the formation of the Labour Party by fusion with political Trade Unionism. The influence of Henry George must not be lost sight of, for in 1879 he re-awakened the spirit of radical reform, which had slept since 1854.

(iii) *Movements toward self-government.*—Two great self-governing movements also increased the control of the people over their environment and the general conditions of life. They greatly enhanced their health and comfort, and were valuable to them for training in public life and in business management. These were *Co-operation* and *Municipal or Local Self-government.*

The Municipal Corporations Act was passed in 1835, and 150 new and growing towns finally secured municipal privileges. The feature of the years between 1867 and 1885 was the democratisation of municipal, urban and rural districts, and parish councils. Soon 30,000 local governing bodies were

in existence—all created after 1835. These administered at least £400,000,000, indirectly employed more than 300,000 persons, and one-half of these bodies spent more money and employed more civil servants than the national government itself in pre-war days. Local government touched the people's lives at every point and gave them a new control over their social environment. It improved the health and happiness of millions. Many Christian men and women, after overcoming religious scruples about entering public life, performed useful service on all these bodies.

The Co-operative Movement, begun by the London Christian Socialists after Robert Owen, and by the twenty-eight weavers in Toad Lane, Rochdale, in 1844, grew rapidly. It attained vast dimensions on the distributive side, and later on the productive. By the twentieth century it had $2\frac{3}{4}$ million families trading with 55 millions of capital, employing 50,000 salaried officials. It has an annual turnover of some 20 millions sterling. This was a successful effort by the workers to supply their own wants as consumers. It was managed from the first exclusively by working men; and it is not surprising that demands rose later for a share by the workers in the control of industry, by means of National Industrial Councils, Whitley Councils, Public Ownership with Joint Control, or Democratic Guild Control. Still later industrial discontent developed, with lack of discipline, the violation of agreements, and Governmental inquiries. These were throes in the transition from the old individualistic order of society to one more adequate to the needs of personality

and to the demand for more freedom and self-government. It has been said that every such transition is marked by "irreverence for laws and by a reversion to natural rights." The movements at the end of the period claimed a much greater recognition of the value of the labour-factor in industry and business, and a new respect for the individual. These demands did not fail to win the ear of twentieth-century Christians, with their new interest in moral personality.

(iv) *Capitalistic Collectivism and Imperialism.*—The earlier period exhibited the attainment of economic power through individual enterprise and competition: this latter, its attainment by combination. By the eighties a new attitude began to be adopted toward free competition by the business world itself. That which had been regarded as the law of nature and the method of Providence was now discovered to be wasteful, detrimental to efficiency and to profit. To compete successfully, especially internationally, meant, it was maintained, to combine adequately. Internal individual competition began to be eliminated, and the Joint Stock Company, the Combine, the Syndicate, led gradually but swiftly to a new kind of collectivism—to monopoly, not by sovereign peoples, but by a few mighty captains of industry and kings in finance. These combinations led to havoc amongst business firms outside them, and they rendered the life of the employee, in many cases, especially at the outset, harder, more monotonous, and more hopeless in outlook. They proved as soulless and selfish as many of the old competitive firms, with a closer and

more menacing grip upon the life of the people as consumers. Corners in necessary articles, cartels to fix prices arbitrarily, restriction of supplies, extorted ransom from the long-suffering community. Food, fuel, housing-materials and a hundred other necessary things were monopolised for profit.

These associations continually grew vaster; and the life of society, in production, consumption and distribution, seemed at the mercy of a very small number of powerful combines. Those in control of armaments became especially dangerous. Mighty federations of industries controlling vast masses of capital began to threaten the vital interests of the workers, of the community itself, and of the State. A form of economic collectivism—capitalistic collectivism, differing from socialistic collectivism in that it meant control by the few for the few, and not control by the many for the whole, the perils of bureaucracy or oligarchy accompanying both—appeared in society. Capitalistic collectivism even sought to induce the State to share control with it in enterprises to their mutual benefit.[1] Thus the wheel went full circle in the economic evolution of

[1] The Report forwarded by Mr. McCurdy from a Government Committee in 1920 to the President of the Board of Trade put the matter succinctly: "The concentration of control over the price and disposition of motor-fuel in the hands of two enormously powerful capitalistic combines, practically world-wide in their scope, constitute so dangerous a power, if it happens to be improperly used, that it is imperative that the Governments of the world should give some attention to it. Their possession of the main sources of supply practically prevents the setting up of any private competition."

industry. The question arose, could a corporation be given a conscience or a soul, as it could be given a legal entity?

A final phase of the reaction from Individualism was that of Capitalistic Imperialism. It has been said that "Collectivism has sown the modern State, but Nationalism has entered and reaped the crop."[1] For thirty years, from 1884 to 1913, Capitalistic Imperialism grew and developed. Ever-increasing hoards of capital sought for more profitable investment abroad than could be obtained at home. Big financiers and their agents obtained 'concessions' in foreign lands. Rivalries and international complications ensued. Policies of 'imperial expansion,' of territorial annexation, of the exploitation of native labour, were inaugurated. The powers of the State were used to defend the interests of 'big business' and of great financiers. The policy of non-intervention in European affairs, of 'peace, retrenchment and reform,' began to pass in the eighties, materialism spread, megalomania seized the ruling classes. The lives and happiness of the helpless many were pledged or mortgaged without their knowledge or consent. Greed of trade and territory, envy, suspicion, fear, led to the growth of great armaments, until overweening militarism and arrogant imperialism, in many countries, precipitated the appalling catastrophe of 1914–18. The heathen maxim of Vegetius, "If you wish for peace, prepare for war," thus refuted itself. The Peace of Versailles brought a 'peace' very much like war. The only ray of

[1] Principal Ernest Barker, *Political Thought from Spencer to Today*, p. 22.

hope was the Covenant attached to it which founded 'The League of Nations,' even if at first it was little more than a League of Allies, with enemy countries—great nations—excluded and America holding aloof from it. This is the most hopeful movement away from Nationalist Individualism or Imperialism, with its recurring wars; and Great Britain from the first has favoured it.

A general indication of the extent of the reaction from Individualism in England was seen in the conviction expressed during the early twentieth century that the one 'all-purposes' Parliament was increasingly incompetent to meet the demands of modern social, industrial and commercial development. Demands were voiced for constitutional attention to function, or the distribution of constitutional power to separate functions of the body politic—such as political, industrial, legislative and administrative—and their union in a kind of federal functionalism. In another direction it was seen in the call for the socialisation or control of credit, as being of national and social creation. Society, which creates credit, was mainly to profit by it, rather than individuals or corporations to an immoderate degree. This was said to be one of the financial lessons of the Great War.

2. The Specifically Christian Reaction.—Christians in numbers found their place in many of the protests and movements described in the foregoing. Most of the protagonists in all of them would probably have maintained that their outlook was dictated to them by the demands of Christian morality as they understood it. But the reaction

took some definitely Christian forms, and that from the very beginning of the period.

In 1877, for instance, the Rev. Stewart Headlam founded the Guild of St. Matthew in Bethnal Green, in conjunction with Mr. F. Verinder, the Revs. W. Moll, F. Shuttleworth and many other clergymen and laymen. It was distinctly socialistic, and had considerable influence. It was the first re-emergence of organised Socialism after the decline of Owenism. The Social Democratic Federation was not formed till 1881. So early as 1872 Professor Seeley of Cambridge had urged the education of the clergy in political and social philosophy, as had Wordsworth in 1835[1] and Carlyle in 1843.[2] Canon Fremantle in the 1882 Bampton Lectures on *The World as the Subject of Redemption*, revealed the wealth of social teaching in the Scriptures and applied it to modern life. Canon Moore Ede in the Hulsean Lectures of 1895 followed him. Arnold Toynbee, disciple of Ruskin, in 1883 delivered with dying breath his important *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*. Toynbee Hall rose in Whitechapel in his memory under Canon Barnett, and the 'Settlement' Movement began. The Rev. Dr. Clifford was early at work with a Christian Socialist League in 1886. The Rev. H. Price Hughes founded the *Methodist Times*, a Christian Socialist journal, in 1890. In 1889 the Christian Social Union, founded by Dr. Gore and Canon Scott Holland, went to the root of the matter, and started *The Economic Review* for the study of duty in relation to social life, and dealt with "economic

[1] See Preface to 1835 edition of Poems.

[2] *Past and Present*, Book IV. ch. ii.

morals from the point of view of Christian teaching." It published two magazines, the *Commonwealth* and *Goodwill*. Bishop Westcott, one of its leaders, emphasised the social teaching of the Incarnation and the social aspects of Christianity in important volumes. As Bishop of Durham he mediated and arbitrated in industrial disputes. The Church Socialist League was founded in 1905. Later, other Christian Churches had their Social Service Unions, beginning with the Wesleyan in 1905, which published in 1906 *The Citizen of To-morrow* and in 1909 *The Social Teaching of the Bible*. Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Primitive Methodists, the Friends and the Unitarians, also established similar Unions. These combined in 1910 in *The Interdenominational Conference of Social Service Unions*, the forerunner of 'C.O.P.E.C.,' which has since held annual Summer Schools and published several volumes of Reports.

The Congregational Union early appointed a Social Service Secretary, and the Wesleyans set up a Social Welfare Department, with a Standing Committee on Industrial and International Relations as part of the official machinery of the Church, and a permanent Secretary. From the day of Cardinal Manning's intervention in the Dockers' Strike of 1888, the Roman Catholic Church in England had worked for social reconstruction and betterment. The Catholic Truth Society has produced Professor Charles L. Devas's *Political Economy*, a competent Christian study of the subject, and Monsignor Henry Parkinson's *Primer of Social Science*.

The latter part of this review indicates renewed

social activity upon the part of influential sections of the Christian Church. The movements just chronicled largely leavened the several official governing bodies of their Churches. Slowly but surely the Christian Churches began to feel concern for more than the individual, to see the ethical defects of the social and industrial system, and to care for the individual's environment. Prejudiced at first against any deviation from the recognised 'spiritual work' of Christianising the individual, they came to intervene in the life of society, to deal with social evils. At first the evils of intemperance, impurity, gambling and poisonous pleasures, engrossed them. Later they began to take up cautiously the evils of injustice, sweating, bad housing and similar questions. These subjects appeared upon occasion in the official agendas of the Church Assemblies. Numerous resolutions began to be passed. In some sections of the Christian Church a rooted objection was for long maintained against intervention in practical politics. This was particularly the case in those Churches which were the outcome of the Evangelical Revival. The Church, they held, must leave such matters to professional politicians and publicists. Party spirit might disturb the peace of the Churches. Indeed participation in politics and even municipal life might destroy the spiritual life of their members. But, as indicated, this attitude began to pass. And so, although it had far from ceased to exist in many quarters, by the end of this period it had been replaced, on the whole, by wider conceptions and a truer understanding of the full meaning of Christianity.

Viewed in this broad historical prospective, the general attitude of Christian people to social questions a hundred years ago, however lamentable, is not wholly inexplicable, and the story of the intervening century is one of progressive improvement. Gradually throughout that period Christian principles have been reasserting themselves in the minds of Christians generally as applicable even in social and political affairs. As one group after another of the victims of social conditions and economic laws have claimed the attention of Christian people, these have refused to allow such conditions and such laws any longer to operate. The process of recovery is by some such stages as these. First of all, conscience insists upon providing all kinds of ameliorative measures and utters itself in spasmodic protests against social evil. Next we have more positive and constructive attempts to reach a condition of social life in which the evils will not arise. Then follows, as a third period, one of more deliberate thought and educational effort to grapple with the problem scientifically all along the line. In this final period, religious faith and feeling are more widely stirred, social evils begin to be felt as matters for deep penitence and reproach, and the possibility of social progress is increasingly identified with positive Christian faith. That we are in the midst of such a movement of thought as this we cannot doubt.

The present protest of the Christian conscience against a system of religious ideas which has no strong constructive word to say to such social evils as ours to-day is most emphatic. The Christian

mind of the present decade is becoming sure "that the one purpose worth striving after is the Kingdom of God, and that no region of life, least of all the sphere of human industry, can be excluded from His sovereignty" (*Archbishops' Report*, p. 48). In spite, too, of the mental lassitude and the social and political disappointments of the last few years, we are convinced that the mind in which Christian people emerged from the war represents still their deepest thought on these questions. That mind is one of deep desire and strong determination to make an end of the types of social arrangement that breed ill-will, unrest and strife. It is a mind of deep faith that in Christianity we have possession of the principles which can show us a better way. "Even now, it is too much to say that English Christendom as a whole is prepared to work Christ's principles out to their full conclusion or to make the sacrifices which they require. But there is a dawn of hope, and the next generation may see a better day" (*Archbishops' Report*, p. 49).

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VI

RETROSPECT

VI. RETROSPECT

Looking back over the whole survey, we may now point out one or two of its practical bearings on the problems of to-day. We do not pretend that history has provided us with any simple and indisputable answers to these problems, or any prescriptions that are plain and easy to apply. Rather does it accentuate our sense of the vast magnitude and complexity of the attempt of the Church to embody its principles in the social order of the world. But that is by no means the end of the matter.

(1) In the first place, our survey makes it abundantly clear that the Church has made this attempt, and has felt it to be of fundamental importance that it should do so. With greater or less persistence and courage at different periods, the Church has endeavoured to make the idea of the Kingdom of God mean something real and practical in the ordering of the world's industrial and political life. The greater its spiritual vitality at any time, the more has this been the case: revival has always led ultimately to social transformation. Thus history as well as exegesis attest the point that the religion of Christ must bring the whole of the collective as well as of the individual life of man within its sway.

At successive periods this side of the conception of the Kingdom of God, as a divinely regulated social order, has been differently interpreted in principle and realised in practice with varying success. We hope our survey has thrown light upon these variations of the ideal, the extent to which they influenced or failed to influence the social relations of the world, and, to a certain extent, the reasons for their comparative success or failure. We do not pretend to have done more than open up a great question, which we hope that many will pursue a great deal farther and thereby learn much for the present day. Particularly would we disclaim the attempt to express any comparative judgment on the value of the contributions made by different Christian bodies. We have done no more than indicate, in the Church's record as a whole, a few of the most outstanding and suggestive points.

(2) In the second place, our survey helps us to see that we are just now slowly but steadily emerging from a period during which the Church has been comparatively ineffective, because deliberately inactive, in the attempt to make Christian principles regulative in social life. This period of religious indifferentism toward the social and political theories which have dominated the last few centuries, doubtless has among its causes the defects of the Church's previous attempts to supply the world with its regulative principles. We think we have said enough to show that such is the case, without having said enough to suggest any judgment between the relative merits of the contribution made by this

age or that. It seems to us clear, however, that the very large success of the Middle Ages in bringing life under the influence of expressed religious principles, which yet were not fully adequate principles, provoked in the end too great a reaction in favour of individual freedom of conduct and against 'ecclesiastical' influence in worldly affairs. The result has been that modern life has formulated its ruling social principles with far less reference to Christ than did the Middle Ages; and the effect on the social relations of mankind has been disastrous. The over-emphasis upon 'individual freedom' as a sufficient solvent of social evils, had brought this country to such a pass by the beginning of the nineteenth century that the Christian conscience was stirred to protest and interference.

The practical bearings of these facts upon our thinking at the present time are fairly obvious. To begin with, we have to look with strong suspicion upon most principles of industrial and social theory formulated in the last few centuries, and upon all those practical maxims of the market-place in which the most convenient of the working principles of the day are crystallised. They are to be suspected, because they are mostly born out of an attitude to life in which Christianity had, for the time being, abdicated its position of decisive influence. The views about property and industry which we have all imbibed are views which were formulated, it must now be recognised, without due regard to the main stream of Christian thinking on these matters in the past, and without due loyalty to Christian principles and sentiments. They were

dominated by a pagan philosophy, which failed to assert the supremacy of spiritual considerations in all realms of life. The true views we are now seeking may therefore prove very difficult to come by, and may be curiously different from the commonplaces of recent generations. At the same time, the fact that Christian thought as a whole is now once more recovering the great trail from which in some important matters it has been wandering more or less for centuries, makes the possibilities of progress in the immediate future immensely greater than we readily imagine.

(3) In the third place, we notice what great vigilance and courage, combined with wisdom, are required to discern the time when great advances can be made in the social standards of an age. In this matter it is as easy for idealism to be premature as for pessimism to miss the chance, though the latter may have been the more prevalent fault. Thus it seems to us indubitable that ancient Christian opinion tolerated slavery far beyond the time when it was in a position to set about uprooting the evil; just as, at a later date, it took the whole system of Feudalism far too completely for granted, as the fixed and unalterable basis for the life of the Middle Ages. We say this without disputing that there may have been times when there were no immediately practicable alternatives to slavery and serfdom respectively, and when, therefore, these imperfect social institutions were rightly accepted and made the best of. It is one thing, however, to bear and mitigate an evil for a season, and quite another to

accept and condone it permanently; and the tendency has always been to believe existing institutions to be more fixed and inevitable than they really are, and thereby to underrate and belittle the power of spiritual forces to transform them.

In all such matters it is necessary for the Church to proceed always along a veritable knife-edge of difficulty. On the one hand, it must not lay upon men's conscience and imagination burdens greater than they can bear, by expecting them suddenly to jump from the moral order to which they are adjusted and attuned, to another enshrining ideals which they can hardly understand—in ways which they can scarcely imagine. Nor must it, on the other hand, suffer men to remain disastrously content with institutions which fail to embody the spiritual principles of their religion.

There have been times, as we have said, when the error was mainly on the side of a cowardly acceptance of the *status quo*. But there have also been times when the mistake has been to misunderstand and misjudge the facts and tendencies of the social life of the period, and to attempt to impose Christian principles upon them in arbitrary and ill-considered ways. As an instance of this we would point to the attempt made by the national Churches, from about the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, to preserve the existing framework of society against the encroachments of nationalism in the sphere of politics, and commercial developments in the sphere of industry. This was done on high principles, but in a way which underrated the spiritual services which trade expansion and national self-

expression respectively might render to the world. It therefore made religion the enemy, where it should have been the guardian and tutor, of the newborn social forces of the modern world—with resultant disaster to both the social and the religious development of modern Europe.

Religion may thus go wrong in either of two ways. It may, on the one hand, attribute too much weight and value to the old-established customs in which the morality of the age has embodied itself, and allow itself to be intimidated by them; or, on the other hand, it may see too little value in the newly emerging social developments which appear from time to time, and threaten to invalidate its ancient maxims and time-honoured loyalties, so causing it to identify its principles with particular rules of conduct whose justification has largely passed away.

(4) In the fourth place, we find ourselves to-day at a point in history where we have fuller knowledge of both the merits and demerits of diverse great attempts to constitute a rightly ordered society. In particular we have knowledge of the great mediæval experiment in collectivist control of industry, and of the great modern experiment in individualist liberty in industry; and we know that we want to find the way to an order of society which has learned from the successes and failures of both, just as in the international sphere we are now in a position to see both advantage and peril in the attempt to allow the nations their independent sovereignty. Such breadth of knowledge, at the disposal of an age which has learned to

believe in the great possibilities of social evolution, puts it in our power to look back upon the Christian social theories which have influenced the past and subject them to a scientific criticism out of which may come the more adequate theory that we need. For it seems to us indisputable that the Church's limited success—often striking failure—to inspire the social life of the past has turned largely on the lack of any adequately thought out theory of human society in relation to the Christian idea of the Kingdom of God.

Certain great efforts to arrive at such a theory have indeed been made by individual thinkers, from the time of Augustine onwards, with abiding effects upon the thought and practice of the Church of later periods—some favourable and some unfavourable to an ideal social development. But they have not been adequate, and that for two very obvious reasons. On the one hand, they were not the outcome of any really effective co-operation of the Christian minds of the time; and yet, on the other hand, they came to be invested with an authority and practical influence to which they had no secure title. They were inadequate, from the first, to the facts of the case as they then stood; and they were bound to become more and more inadequate as the facts themselves changed during the ensuing ages.

Now this lesson is of the greatest practical moment for us. For it affords not only warning as to where the Church to-day may still be largely lacking, but also the strongest ground for hope as to the future possibilities of more rapid progress, and that at

no distant date. It is to further the realisation of such a hope by utilising the possibilities of *corporate thinking* that the Birmingham Conference has been projected and prepared for. And in so far as it is more fully representative and inclusive of Christian experiences and thoughts than anything hitherto attempted in Great Britain, it is full of promise for such progress.

"Knowledge is power." A new knowledge of the past, and of what its experiments have to teach the present, is within our reach to-day. Social science, too, has placed at our disposal new knowledge alike of the conditions and methods whereby we may surely and effectively modify our present social relations and institutions, and of the means of implanting and fostering new and more inspiring ideals of fruitful co-operative fellowship. New knowledge also is abroad of the need of religion—and particularly of Christianity, as the most ethical of all religions—to supply and maintain the moral enthusiasm that is required to translate true social theory into living social practice. Thus, in the words of a thoughtful sociologist,[1] who has given special attention to the subject from both sides: "A new hope has come to the world—that science (*i. e.* social science) may unite with religion in the work of redeeming mankind; that we of this generation may discover a new synthesis of aspiration with knowledge." There lies in that statement a challenge to the Church to make knowledge, in a quite new degree, the ally of personal devotion and religious

[1] Dr. Charles A. Ellwood, in his *Christianity and Social Science, a Challenge to the Church* (Macmillan, 1923), p. 1.

idealism, in the age-long task of the Christian transformation of society.

Signed: J. Vernon Bartlet (*Chairman.*)
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The members of the Commission who, having co-operated in the preparation of the above Report, attach their signatures, do so as individuals and in no way commit the Churches or Societies of which they are members. The acceptance of the Report by a signatory denotes agreement with the general substance of the Report, but not necessarily with every detail.

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